The New Criterion

October 2004

A monthly review *edited by Hilton Kramer*

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Notes & Comments: October 2004

No Lapham matter

As we write, the great entertainment afforded by Dan Rather, the celebrity news reader, is still unfolding. How solemn Mr. Rather looked a few weeks ago as he unveiled, on *60 Minutes II*, those incriminating memoranda. Mr. Rather has basically two modes when performing: Deeply Sincere—the mode that he adopted, for example, when interviewing Saddam Hussein shortly before the dictator's mandatory retirement last year—and Righteously Indignant. He adopted the latter as he explained to his television audience that, back in the early 1970s, President Bush got special treatment when he was in the National Guard: See, it says so right here in black and white.

It took about fifteen minutes for some alert bloggers to start picking holes in Dan Rather's evidence. How odd that those memoranda, broadcast to millions on the eve of a presidential election, should boast superscripts and proportionally spaced letters, typographical niceties that are common as dirt now but that were far beyond the capabilities of even the most advanced office typewriters in the early 1970s.

But this is CBS talking! Never mind those weirdos in pyjamas who sit in front of their computers all day pretending to be news commentators. (The "pyjamas" was a nice touch, much ridiculed by Internet bloggers.) We authenticate our documents! We had no fewer than four experts vet the memos (though we will tell you the name of only one). We stand by our story. We can't, of course, reveal our source for the memos: sanctity of journalistic freedom, the public's right to know, a matter of principle. The memos are genuine. We stand by our story. We stand by our story . . .

Bluster. Stonewall. Collapse. Perhaps the most pathetic moment came, a week or two into what had already come to be called Rathergate (or, sometimes, Rathergate), when the $7 million news reader announced that, should the documents turn out to be forgeries, he wanted to be the one to break the story. Too late for that, Dan! Four-hundred and twenty-seven bloggers beat you to it.

If wishes were horses, beggars would ride and those memos would be genuine. My, how strenuously the mainstream media—what gleeful bloggers have begun referring to as "legacy media"—wished. A prize for effort must go to *The New York Times*, which explained in a headline that "Memos on Bush Are Fake but Accurate, Typist Says." Think about that: "Fake, but Accurate": that is, "Guilty, though Innocent."

As the dust settles, there are still a few unanswered questions—such as, who forged those memos? We know now that Dan Rather's "unimpeachable" (yes, really) source was one Bill Burkett, a wretched chap who spends a lot of time scheming to bring down President Bush. But where did he get the docu-

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ments? Silence on that one, and no surprise, since, as William Safire pointed out, we might well be dealing here with a felony. "If the artifice had not been revealed by sharp-eyed bloggers," Mr. Safire noted, "a national election could have been swung by a blatant falsehood."

But wasn't that the point, the object, of the exercise? Let's say someone sidled up to Dan Rather and offered him documents of doubtful authenticity and mysterious provenance that were damaging to John Kerry: would he have rushed to share them with the nation? Would *The New York Times* have entertained us with the Orwellian "Fake but Accurate" gambit? To ask these questions is to answer them. The so-called "mainstream" media may be on its way to "legacy" status; there can be no question, however, about its left-leaning, anti-Republican, and especially its anti-Bush, political bias. How ironical, then, that even as Rathergate was slouching towards Nowhere to be born, Lewis H. Lapham, the longtime editor of *Harper's*, should publish "Tentacles of Rage: The Republican Propaganda Mill" in the September issue of that once-distinguished magazine. Mr. Lapham subtended the rubric "a brief history" to the title of his 7500-word jeremiad; "a desperate fantasy" would have been more accurate.

Mr. Lapham has made an awesome discovery. Conservatives have ideas; moreover, they are willing to support those ideas by funding people and institutions that promote them!

Mr. Lapham doesn't put it like that, of course. On the contrary, he treats the readers of *Harper's* to page after page of breathless, hysterical prose in order to expose "the re-education program undertaken in the early 1970s by a cadre of ultraconservative and self-mythologizing millionaires bent on rescuing the country from the hideous grasp of Satanic liberalism." If Lewis Lapham is right, American democracy is facing its gravest threat ever. No, Islamofascism is not the problem—it's *Republicans*. At least since the early 1970s, he says, rich and insidiously clever Republicans have duped the American public with policies whose goals include the "the deliberate impoverishment of the American middle-classes," the suspension of "civil liberties," "the privatization (a.k.a. the theft) of its common property—the broadcast spectrum as well as the timber, the water, and the air, the reserves of knowledge together with the mineral deposits and the laws." How diabolically clever those Republicans are, for they have managed to "sell the suckers on the notion that their 'values' are at risk (abortionists escaping the nets of the Massachusetts state police, pornographers and cosmetic surgeons busily at work in Los Angeles, farm families everywhere in the Middle West becoming chattels of the welfare state)" while simultaneously distracting them from the fact that "their pockets have been picked."

How did these evil people manage this political and intellectual larceny? Money and, if Mr. Lapham is right, stupidity. Conservatives, he warns, have spent $3 billion in the past thirty years promoting their ideas—well, Mr. Lapham doesn't say "promoting their ideas," for it is part of his gospel that conservatives don't have ideas, only—here he quotes Lionel Trilling—"irritable mental gestures which seek to resemble ideas." But all that money wouldn't have had its desired effect unless the American public, sheeplike, was susceptible to this horrible assault on its freedoms and interests. How lucky we are, then, to have Mr. Lapham: like Ishmael, he only has escaped to tell us of this enormity.

Mr. Lapham's essay is full of charts and tables detailing the nefarious flow of money to conservative causes. There is nothing new here: liberals have been "exposing" philanthropic support for conservative causes for years. Three billion dollars in thirty years—that's a lot of money. But wait, doesn't the Ford Foundation support a galaxy of left-wing causes with half a billion dollars *every year*? And what about the Rockefeller Foundation, the Guggenheim Foundation, the various MacArthur Foun-

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dations? (The J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation, Mr. Lapham neglects to mention, provides an annual subsidy of $2,150,000 to *Harper's*.) What about, for that matter, Teresa Heinz Kerry, who through her foundations doled out $65 million to left-liberal causes in 2002?

In fact, liberal philanthropy outspends conservative philanthropy by at least a factor of 25 to 1. But that is immaterial to Mr. Lapham. For him, conservatives by definition do not support ideas, they support "propaganda." Indeed, in the world according to Lapham, conservatives by definition are propagandists, never thinkers. Norman Podhoretz is "a rabid propagandist." Irving Kristol, though charming and "bright" (thanks, Lewis!) is also a "propagandist" who betrayed his early Trotskyite commitments for filthy lucre: "the times changed, the winds of fortune shifting from east to west, and after a stint as a CIA asset in the 1950s, he had carried his pens and papers into winter quarters on the comfortably upholstered bourgeois right."

According to Mr. Lapham, no conservative writes a book or article in order to say what he thinks is true; he does it at the behest of some nameless conservative power broker in order to advance a political interest. Milton Friedman's *Free to Choose*, Charles Murray's *Losing Ground*, Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*: you might have supposed these were thoughtful contributions to important issues of the day. Not a chance of it: Mr. Lapham reveals that they are merely "expensively purchased and cleverly promoted tracts."

It must be said that Mr. Lapham's imagination was working overtime in "Tentacles of Rage." Not to put too fine a point on it, the piece is filled with errors, misstatements, and outright fabrications. One delightful bit of fantasy involves Mr. Lapham's claim that he was offered $200,000 a year "for life" to edit what would become *The New Criterion*. If only. That sum, Mr. Lapham said (more than $380,000 in today's money), "spoke to the seriousness of the rightist intent to corner and control the national market in ideas." Ah, yes, if only we could get Lewis Lapham on our side, then we would at last be able to "corner and control the national market in ideas"!

But the most compelling moment of fantasy came when Mr. Lapham reported on the Republican National Convention. "The speeches in Madison Square Garden," Mr. Lapham wrote,

> affirmed the great truths now routinely preached from the pulpits of Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal*—government the problem, not the solution; the social contract a dead letter; the free market the answer to every maiden's prayer—and while listening to the hollow rattle of the rhetorical brass and tin, I remembered . . .

"While listening"? "Remembered"? Oh dear, oh dear. Mr. Lapham forgot that he wrote and published this *before* the Republican National Convention. One grateful reader commended Mr. Lapham on his ability to travel in time. Mr. Lapham replied that his "rhetorical invention" was a "mistake." But it wasn't a mistake. As Nick Schulz wrote on the Internet site Tech Central Station, "the only 'mistake' Lapham made is in revealing for all to see what has long been known by anyone who pays attention to the news: the major media routinely bring to their coverage of significant political events a predetermined storyline—you might want to call it a 'Lapham.' Facts that undermine the storyline are ignored or explained away as aberrations to The Truth."

As an epigraph for "Tentacles of Rage," Mr. Lapham quotes Richard Hofstadter: "When, in all our history, has anyone with ideas so bizarre, so archaic, so self-confounding, so remote from the basic American consensus, ever got so far?" That is, we thought, an excellent question. The officials at the J. Roderick MacArthur Foundation may wish to ponder it while inhaling the Lapham gas that *Harper's* has become.

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Gulliver's travails: The U.S. in the post-Cold-War world

by John O'Sullivan

Towards the close of the twentieth century a metaphor entered circulation that compared the United States to Lemuel Gulliver at the start of his visit to Lilliput. Gulliver in Swift's satire was, you recall, an English sea doctor who, having sunk exhausted on a foreign beach after his ship was wrecked, woke up to discover miniscule Lilliputians had tied him down with slender threads and tiny pegs. In this telling, the international community—that comfortable euphemism for the U.N., the WTO, the ICC, other U.N. agencies, and the massed ranks of NGOs—sought to constrain America's freedom of action in a web of international laws, regulations, and treaties, such as the Kyoto accords.

It is a passably accurate account of the international status quo a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall. That status quo looks somewhat different five years later. But the history of the intervening period is the story of how the United States and the international community continued to grapple with each other in the process of seeking to contain or defeat Islamist terrorism. It is the story of "Gulliver's Travails."

Gulliver among the Tranzis

The first episode is the globalizing decade that ran from the final collapse of the Soviet Union to September 11th. This was a period in which trade walls were reduced, barriers to capital movements liberalized, and the factors of production loosened up to move around the world more freely than at any time since 1914. These economic changes brought political ones in their train. Governments had to introduce such reforms as market transparency and the rule of law in order to attract and keep the foreign investment they needed for sustained prosperity.

All this is well known. But two other global developments passed unnoticed under the radar of conventional politics.

The first was the spread of Islamist terrorism. In retrospect it is astounding that we failed to react more strongly to the first bombing of the World Trade Center, the bombings of the American embassies in East Africa, and the attack on the USS Cole. Maybe Americans were insulated from a sensible anxiety by their victory in the Cold War, their status as the sole remaining superpower, and the sedative effects of the long Reagan-Clinton prosperity. Whatever the reason, Islamist terrorism grew throughout the 1990s partly because it was ignored.

The second global development was the quiet revolution of transnationalism. Its exact lineaments are open to debate, but I would suggest that it consists of five overlapping developments:

First, the growing power and authority of international, transnational, and supranational organizations such as the U.N. and its various agencies, the European Union, and the World Trade Organization.

Second, the transformation of international law from the arbitration of disputes

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between sovereign states into laws that have a direct impact on individual citizens and private bodies through treaties and conventions that override domestic legislation.

Third, the dramatic increase in the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs in the jargon) and their increasing influence on international politics both as pressure groups and as providers of services to governments and international agencies.

Fourth, the spread of economic, environmental, and social regulation from the national to the international level through laws, treaties, and "standards" by, among other bodies, U.N. conferences on such topics as women's rights and racism.

Finally, the emergence of common values, a common outlook, and even a class consciousness among the diplomats, lawyers, and bureaucrats in international organizations, NGOs, multinational corporations, and those academic centers that serve them.

Kenneth Minogue calls this structure of governance "Acronymia" after the UNOs and NGOs that constitute it. He credits the present author with giving the name "Olympians," after the gods of Antiquity, to those who administer it. Ancient gods used to "kill us for their sport," but modern Olympians are content to regulate and preach at us. John Fonte has defined the common ideology they preach as "transnational progressivism": national sovereignty and the nation-state are disappearing in favor of a new structure of international organizations and rules that goes by the slippery name of "global governance." In domestic politics, it argues that liberal democracy—built upon majority rule, individual rights, and a common culture—is being replaced by "post-democracy" that emphasizes group rights, multiculturalism, and politics as endless negotiations between ethnic groups. But the theory hardly distinguishes international from domestic politics and policy. The philosopher Jürgen Habermas coined the term "global domestic policy" that erases a distinction hitherto important outside Germany.

As a term for those holding this ideology, "transnational progressives" is too big a mouthful. Olympians is, well, too Olympian. A London lawyer, David Carr, of the libertarian blog Samizdata, compressed the former into "the Tranzis," now in common circulation.

The Tranzis had (and have) a very complicated relationship with Gulliver. Because of America's overwhelming power, they hoped that the United States could be conscripted to serve the purposes of "the international community" (i.e. themselves) in a series of humanitarian interventions. But they recognized dimly that the United States, as a constitutional liberal democracy, would never fit comfortably into the post-democratic structures of global governance they were constructing. Thus Jeremy Rabkin points out in *Sovereignty* that America stands out from almost all other advanced states in this regard:

> Every state in the European Union now acknowledges that its constitution can be overturned by mere bureaucratic directives from the European Commission in Brussels; there is nothing like a fixed constitution to constrain the Commission itself. The arrangement is unthinkable in America but taken for granted in Europe.

Because the United States has a strong constitutional tradition, it regularly attaches a rider to treaties and U.N. conventions that forbids the overriding of the U.S. Constitution. These riders come under occasional attack from international lawyers and activist NGOs that would like, for instance, to override the First Amendment in order to outlaw "hate speech." These pressures are growing and, as Judge Robert Bork points out in his recent book *Coercing Virtue*, American judges have begun to cite foreign precedents in their legal reasoning.

Even so, the United States will always be an awkward irritant in post-democratic structures—just as the British, with their similar liberal tradition, are the awkward squad inside the E.U. And if the United States is going to be an irritant, then its su-

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perpower status would make it a very serious irritant indeed. Tranzis were busily wrapping it around with as many legal and regulatory threads as possible when Al Qaeda struck at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—and Gulliver woke up.

Gulliver Unbound

It is often said that September 11 changed the United States dramatically—as no other country understands. There is some truth in this. A direct attack on American soil served to unite, if briefly, the four American traditions in foreign policy identified by Walter Russell Mead in his *Special Providence*—moralistic Jeffersonians, commercial Hamiltonians, evangelical humanitarian Wilsonians, and vengeful Jacksonians—in favor of a strong response. Wilsonians saw the attack as a chance to bring democracy to similar breeds without the law; Hamiltonians judged that a short war would be a prudent disincentive to future attacks; Jacksonians wanted to punish Osama, Saddam, and anyone else who had trodden on the United States, and Jeffersonians (who overlap heavily with Tranzis) sought a strong response blessed by the international community.

Such unity could not last. After Afghanistan, Jeffersonians reverted to type and became more pacific. But even now many of them are significantly more hawkish than European social democrats with whom they usually find common ground. Britain's participation in Iraq is a reminder that Mead's four traditions have substantial roots in the four British "folkways" that the historian David Hackett Fischer identifies as the principal currents in American culture. Blair, who comes from the Borders, should be a Jacksonian but is actually a muscular Wilsonian—in Britain a Gladstonian.

In addition to shocking America into a strong response, September 11 was also the confirmation of a foreign policy analysis and set of proposals that had been laid out well in advance of the attack—but that seemed too robust in the previous intellectual climate. For instance, in her 1996 reprise of Churchill's Fulton Speech, Lady Thatcher argued that the combination of rogue states and weapons of mass destruction was sufficiently threatening to justify the military overthrow of regimes like Saddam Hussein's. But since this was unlikely to happen in the prevailing climate of opinion, she argued, then we should adopt the second-best solution of missile defense. September 11 changed that intellectual climate. The set of foreign policy concepts that justified ousting Saddam was retrieved from the files. Gulliver was suddenly unbound.

What was the new strategy that the Bush administration adopted? It begins with Lady Thatcher's analysis that there were two linked dangers: the spread of WMDs and the existence of rogue states like Saddam's Iraq or Gadaffi's Libya. September 11th added two more threats: Islamist terrorists who seemed impervious to the rational logic of deterrence and "failing states" like Afghanistan, where terrorist groups could operate with little or no state supervision. It was plausible in this new world to imagine a terrorist group, answerable to no one but itself, either being given or seizing WMDs and using them against the West. That was too dangerous a threat to be dealt with by waiting for the terrorists to attack and then pursuing them through the courts.

The Bush administration accordingly built a new strategy on four concepts. The first was preemption. If the United States could not wait for New York harbor to be destroyed by a nuclear bomb in a container ship, then it had to attack the attacker and disable his weapon before he could act. This right of preemption has recently been discussed as if it were a novelty just invented by some Doctor Strangelove in the Pentagon. In fact it has been recognized in international law since the 1837 when, ironically enough, the British in Canada launched a preemptive strike against an American privateer that they rightly suspected was about to supply arms to Canadian rebels. Terrorists armed with WMDs or states with terrorist links ac-

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quiring WMDs are much more terrible threats and thus far stronger justification for preemptive action. The United States asserted its right to take preemptive action to avert them.

But would the international community agree? No matter: if necessary, the United States would defend its national security without the authorization of the U.N. It would generally seek such authorization but it would not be deterred from acting in its compelling interests by a vote in the Security Council that might turn on less significant political considerations.

If the United States were prepared to go ahead with military action not approved by the U.N., however, would any other nation go along with it? America's traditional allies would be (and were) divided. So the United States dusted down a third concept that had been kicking around NATO for several years to deal with such crises—namely, "coalitions of the willing." Such a coalition is a group of states that agree on three things: the nature of a threat; the solution to it; and the need of all to contribute real resources to carry it out. Its great merit is its practicality: every state that joins such a coalition is a useful ally. The United States found such allies first for Afghanistan and later for Iraq.

Extirpating terrorist groups was, however, only half of the solution. The Bush doctrine also incorporated the highly ambitious, even hubristic, aim of fostering the circumstances in which young Arabs and Muslims would not become terrorists in the first place. Terrorism, it was argued, was the response of young and often well-educated people to the failure, injustice, and oppression of the authoritarian societies of the Middle East. To prevent these societies from sowing dragons' teeth indefinitely, we would need to bring liberty and justice to them. President Bush therefore embarked on a fourth concept—a serious long-term strategy of encouraging Arab and Muslim democracy and, in the short term, of using a liberated Iraq as the laboratory of such democratic reform.

These four concepts were bold in themselves, boldly stated, and boldly implemented. Both traditional conservatives and "realists," among others, became nervous. They saw the first three policies as likely to cause division in the Atlantic alliance and the fourth as an ambitious social engineering project that was unlikely to succeed. But Gulliver had shaken off these hesitations and uncertainties and, deaf to their warnings, went forging ahead. Others were discomfited by this display of muscular unilateralism. Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, of course—but the Tranzis too.

For the Tranzis, September 11 had transformed the world in a very displeasing way. International organizations and NGOs were less important than before because they were not very helpful in fighting terrorists. Sovereign nation-states regained prestige because they had armies and intelligence services. At least three of the four concepts of foreign policy embraced by the Bush administration were in conflict with the international rules and codes of behavior laid down by the Tranzis in their courts, agencies, treaties, and NGO conferences. And the fourth—promoting democracy—was an intrusion on their turf.

These conflicts were relatively subdued over Afghanistan since the U.S. intervention was readily justifiable as self-defense under the U.N. Charter. But they burst forth violently when it became clear that President Bush intended to invade Iraq.

A minority of NATO governments opposed the intervention. Some genuinely felt it was an error that would damage America and the West. Many Europeans, especially in Germany, thought that concepts such as preemption were primitive ideas that a mature rule-driven Europe had left behind in its moral evolution. And French policy saw Iraq as an opportunity to rally Europeans against the U.S. "hyper-power." But these hostile reactions were countered by support for the United States from Britain, Italy, Poland, Spain, and other European states—and there was no possibility of building a common European opposition to the United States. The U.N. Secretary General and his bureau-

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cracy opposed intervention on the grounds that military action lacking U.N. approval was, *ipso facto*, illegitimate. This argument is a legal novelty, according to Robert Bork, but it was treated as authoritative and binding by most commentators. It was the opposition of NGOs that was the most extreme, however, presumably because it was less trammeled by diplomatic considerations. It was leveled, moreover, against the Afghan intervention as well as that in Iraq. Their argument consisted mainly of predictions that there would be major starvation and environmental and refugee crises as a result of the U.S. interventions. In fact, all these situations actually improved in Afghanistan and Iraq. And that weakened them still further.

The influence of the Tranzis after September 11 was almost negligible. And by April 2003, Gulliver was in Baghdad placing an American flag over the toppling statue of Saddam Hussein. Gulliver was not merely unbound; he seemed unstoppable.

Gulliver Agonistes

Even those who were supporters of the Iraqi liberation—as I was and remain—have to acknowledge that the war fell far short of our expectations. Large stockpiles of WMDs have not been found. Armed terrorist resistance has been stronger and more widespread than we anticipated. Popular feeling has turned against the American forces supporting the Coalition and the new Iraqi government—as a result of Abu Ghraib, and necessary military actions against the insurgents.

At the same time the intervention has had undeniably valuable benefits. The Iraqi people are free for the first time in almost fifty years. There is a free press, freedom of association, a multiplicity of political parties, and all the apparatus of a liberal democracy. Political prisoners have been freed from torture and captivity—an achievement that has received far less media coverage than the failure to find WMDs. And now an internationally recognized Iraqi government—not yet an elected one, but still the most representative government in the Arab world—has been established. If elections follow next January then the most important American promises will have been kept.

Of course, a final judgment on Iraq will not be possible for some years. If, in a decade, there is a flourishing democracy in Baghdad, then we will judge the U.S. intervention to be an unqualified success. We would even think it a worthwhile effort if, as Mark Steyn has speculated, the Iraqis end up with a moderate authoritarian regime that allows free speech, free markets and some kind of parliament—and that generally votes with Tunisia and Morocco at international forums. If Iraq has descended into a Lebanon-like chaos or a Taliban-like autocracy—either of which would provide a base for international terrorism directed against the United States—then the Iraqi intervention would have proved an actual setback in the war on terror. And that, alas, cannot be ruled out.

Gulliver in Iraq is Gulliver Agonistes, baffled that Iraq has not gone better, resentful that his good intentions are questioned, determined to keep the essence of his new strategy but willing to amend it in the light of experience, still very powerful but perhaps somewhat less blindly optimistic. He has to reassess four matters in particular in the light of his painful experiences—preemption, unilateralism, legitimacy, and democracy.

Preemption is as necessary as it ever was—which, given the linked threats of rogue or failed states, terrorism, and WMD proliferation, is very necessary indeed. Unfortunately, it is less credible as a policy option. Because Iraq has proved to be more troublesome than predicted, any future proposal for preemptive intervention will need to meet a far higher threshold of threat. The admitted intelligence failure over Iraqi WMDs has made it harder by discrediting an essential pillar of preemption. If we are likely to be wrong about the existence of such weapons, it is that much harder to make a convincing case for an intervention to disable them.

The most speedy and conclusive solution to the problem of a weakened case for

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preemption is one we must all hope to avoid: namely, a massively destructive attack on the U.S. Such a catastrophe would wipe away any emerging "Iraq Syndrome." Short of that, however, the United States has to establish the reasonableness of the preemptive approach. Outlining a credible threat and citing accurate legal precedents for preemption go a long way towards doing this. Improving intelligence should logically help too—though not with those who are opposed to intelligence services in the first place. But the United States may also need to soothe the anxieties both of the U.S. public and of those allies who see preemption as a mark of unilateralist arrogance. Earlier this year a blue-ribbon committee of the Council on Foreign Relations, chaired by Henry Kissinger, proposed that the United States should agree preemption is a last resort in return for European acceptance of its legitimacy on that basis. Since preemption *is* a last resort, that is a compromise well worth exploring. Whatever the diplomatic difficulties, however, the United States has to assert the principle that it is rightly entitled to strike at its enemies before they strike a near-mortal blow to it.

Unilateralism is a very different matter—the United States sustained serious wounds defending a policy it had never adopted. There was never a policy of "going it alone" without allies. Indeed, most NATO and E.U. member states joined in the Iraq intervention. There was not even a policy of riding roughshod over international organizations such as the U.N.. In the Afghan and Iraq wars, the Bush administration strenuously sought the approval of the U.N. Security Council. One of its main arguments for intervention was that the U.N.'s authority would be undermined if its resolutions were flouted with impunity. And it justified its own eventual use of force as necessary to enforce those resolutions. (Doubtless such arguments cloaked decisions taken on other grounds of power politics. But so do almost *all* arguments at the U.N.)

All that unilateralism amounted to in reality was the assertion that the United States would defend its vital interests in the last resort by force if it could not win the approval of the U.N. Security Council for doing so. That assertion rests on a combination of national sovereignty and the right of self-defense under the U.N. Charter. It would be endorsed by most U.N. member-states. And its modest logic was established in a BBC radio debate between Richard Perle, the foremost neoconservative strategist, and Baroness Shirley Williams, a moderate social democratic peer. Perle argued that the liberation of Iraq was either right or wrong. If Baroness Williams thought it was wrong, she should oppose it. If she thought it was right, why would she subordinate her opinion to a Chinese, Russian, or French veto in the Security Council? The only riposte to Perle's question is that a statesman might subordinate one aim to gain a larger one. But that cannot be a reason for subordinating one's national interest to a Chinese or Russian veto *in principle*. Of course, for the Tranzis such subordination is the point. They see it as the central principle of global governance and treat the mildest resistance to it as "unilateralism."

Indeed, unilateralism had been originally placed in public debate by such critics of the Bush administration. In their lexicon, it was a wonderfully flexible term that transformed any expression of national sovereignty into a wholesale rejection of multilateral cooperation. Even the very limited unilateralism of the Bush doctrine (which repeatedly embraced multilateralism) was held to be sinful—the more so because it was explicit. If it had appeared in a footnote, a codicil, or the obscurity of an academic text rather than as one of the main arguments in an official document, it might have been seen as the qualification to multilateral diplomacy that it was. Instead it seemed to be a brash declaration of U.S. solipsism. And when the United States got into difficulties in Iraq, its enemies (including the Tranzis) could plausibly cite them as the inevitable fall that follows pride.

Here was where the Tranzis began to make a comeback from their slide into ir-

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relevance after September 11. The rest of the world wanted to see the sole remaining superpower subject to some other authority when it intervened elsewhere. As a practical matter the United States was unable to confer *legitimacy* upon its own actions. But the Tranzis are partly in the business of conferring it on international actions from their various legal, charitable, and political perches in Acronymia. In revamping its Iraq policy, the United States bowed to this reality. Having initially excluded the U.N. from serious involvement in postwar Iraq, the United States brought the organization back in both to negotiate a new political order and to bestow international legitimacy on the new Iraqi government.

That may have been a reasonable accommodation to political necessity. But it raises a question: if the U.N. or other organization dominated by Tranzis either refuses to approve or vetos some vital American action, what should the United States then do?

For such eventualities Francis Fukuyama has proposed a strategy of "overlapping multilateralism." Recall that the intervention in Kosovo was undertaken without U.N. approval—indeed condemned as illegitimate by Kofi Annan. Yet it was accepted by the international community, including the Europeans, because it was endorsed by NATO. Other interventions have been similarly blessed by regional security organizations—the recent West African intervention by ECOWAS and the liberation of Grenada by the Organization of East Caribbean States. There are, of course, many other such bodies—and most of them are international bodies ultimately answerable to national governments rather than transnational or supranational bodies accountable largely to themselves. What international opinion asks is that the United States should pay a decent respect to the opinions of mankind. It recognizes that the U.N. is a very imperfect expression of that opinion since its membership contains despots, it treats states of very different sizes equally, and its decisions are sometimes distorted by the necessity of a great-power veto. So there is a willingness among serious nations to accept that other institutions might have the power to confer legitimacy to certain interventions.

Even if overlapping multilateralism is pursued it is likely to prove a very modest change in a largely unaccountable and—as the "Oil for Food" scandal has demonstrated—very corrupt system. Some distinguished public figures propose an alternative organization that would exert moral authority within the international system by virtue of its democratic composition and liberal credentials. It would not have the full diplomatic role of the U.N., but it might pull the organization in the right direction, setting standards for good international behavior, encouraging states to meet them in order to qualify for membership, and itself conferring legitimacy on actions it deemed justified. In theory, the Community of Democracies, formed in Warsaw during the Clinton administration, might be such a body. In order for this to happen, however, the United States would have to put a great deal of diplomatic weight and energy behind it. There is no guarantee it would succeed—or that if it did, the Community would significantly improve matters.

That brings us to Bush's project of spreading *democracy*. It has, of course, been much ridiculed in Europe. This ridicule is ignoble, but some of the criticisms it employs are not themselves unreasonable: Iraq, for instance, is the kind of ethnically and religiously divided society that has historically been difficult terrain for majority-rule government. Bringing democracy to the Arab and Islamic worlds is likely to be a long, difficult, and tortuous task. It is not certain to succeed. If it does, the Islamic democracy that would result will look very different from our Atlantic institutions. But it is in our interest to encourage the development of liberal, moderate, and decent governments in the Middle East that may become fully democratic over time. We would be well-advised to do so from outside—giving advice, technical assistance, and financial aid to sovereign states, and protecting friendly ones *in*

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extremis. In the case of Iraq, having taken over the country, we have to help establish a democratic government there—even if it later diverges from full democratic virtue in the interests of staying alive.

As these remarks show, I do not underestimate the difficulties of establishing democracy in the Middle East. But they are trivial compared to the difficulties of establishing post-democracy there. Yet as John Fonte points out, the Community of Democracies already shows signs of being bureaucratically captured by the "Tranzis" who would seek to do just that. A conference of NGOs at Seoul in 2002, organized by the Community, proposed gender quotas to elect women in proportion to their numbers in the population. Not only are these ideas inconsistent with the bedrock democratic principle that the voters should have an unfettered choice of candidates, but they are also likely to outrage the traditional societies at which Bush's democracy project is aimed.

If Gulliver is to foster democracy and to pursue the war against Islamist terrorism in the aftermath of the Iraq intervention without being frustrated by the Tranzis at every turn, he must set about dismantling the structure of transnational progressive power and demystifying its ideology. But a large baby seems to be blocking his way.

Gulliver Meets an Infant Brobdingnagian

It would be odd—and contrary to American interests—to focus entirely on spreading democracy in the Middle East and to ignore entirely the democratic deficit that exists across the transnational and supranational agencies of Minogue's Acronymia. These bodies claim considerable powers over both national governments and the citizens of their countries. They issue directives with the force of law, fine corporations, prosecute individuals, and interrogate retired statesmen. The U.N. system in particular has spawned new treaties and conventions that propagate international norms on women's rights, sustainable development, environmental standards, and so on—and U.N. monitoring bodies to ensure that national governments meet their supposed treaty obligations. These conferences set international political agendas that conscript governments, even when they have not ratified the treaties, and that make their way into domestic law via the courts citing customary international law. But they have not been elected by anyone. They are not accountable to any electorate. The laws and regulations they promulgate we cannot repeal or even amend. The U.N. conventions are often composed of special interest NGOs. And, almost comically, the monitoring bodies generally include inspectors drawn from the diplomatic services of despotic and authoritarian regimes.

The democratic deficit in these bodies is frequently admitted by the Tranzis running them, but their admission is then treated as a frank and manly acknowledgment that has solved the problem. In fact, they will not reform without firm pressure from outside. They have a class interest in maintaining their power. And they have ideological allies in most European political parties. Only the United States might lead the resistance to this growing nexus of unaccountable power, in part because its classical liberal U.S. Constitution forbids the Tranzi project of global governance and the loss of democratic sovereignty that it entails.

Like Lilliputians dealing with Gulliver, the Tranzis could not independently resist pressure from a determined United States. If, however, a giant inhabitant of Brobdingnag were to come to their assistance, Gulliver would be defeated. Can the Tranzis hope for similar assistance? Most rising powers—China, India, Japan, Indonesia, Brazil—have little sympathy with Tranzi ideology because it threatens the independent national power they are just beginning to enjoy. The exception is a rising power composed of declining ones—the European Union.

The E.U. sees itself, internally and externally, as the model of a new kind of postmodern superpower. In the accounts of its

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theorists such as Robert Cooper, the Eurocrat author of *The Breaking of Nations*, the world is divided like Gaul into three parts: premodern states like the failing despotisms of the Middle East; modern nation-states such as the United States that still exhibit the vital signs of democracy and patriotism, and postmodern polities that have moved into a future of overlapping jurisdictions, multiple national identities, and governance by treaty obligation. These features of the postmodern E.U. are not merely consistent with Tranzi ideology. They *are* Tranzi ideology, conforming to Fonte's analsyis and exhibiting the aversion to clear lines of democratic accountability that are hallmarks of Tranzi institution-building.

In large measure the E.U. is a Tranzi project—though one still hobbled by scattered resistance from the voters and national governments. It has a missionary desire to export its distinctive postnational ideology to the rest of the world. It is increasingly driven by an ideological hostility to the United States as the classical liberal democratic alternative to its own post-democracy. And in particular it believes itself superior to the United States in dealing with premodern states and Islamist terrorism—preferring diplomacy to the war on terror and deferring to international bodies in principle.

If the United States is to defeat the terrorists in war or the Tranzis in international politics, it will have to take on the E.U. first. It is likely that this clash will occur most substantially over the war on terror. The United States and the leading E.U. powers have been drifting apart over how to conduct that war; it became an acute crisis over Iraq, and European skeptics have felt themselves vindicated, not wholly unreasonably, by the course of events since Baghdad fell. They will therefore want to conduct the war against Islamist terrorism on intelligence rather than military lines. They will be supported by Acronymia. But the United States—under Bush and probably under Kerry—will confirm the general lines of the Bush doctrine. And the clash will worsen.

Mark Steyn has argued in various venues that this process is likely to end in a complete breach. The NATO allies are inevitably drifting away from the United States and into a policy of appeasing Al Qaeda. Given Mr. Steyn's fine record of prescience since September 11, only a rash man would gainsay him. But there is another possibility rooted in the fact that the first reactions of most people to a violent but distant revolution are generally appeasing—*vide* the reactions of almost everyone except Burke and Churchill to the French and Nazi revolutions respectively. Only when it becomes clear that the terrorists' aims are limitless and that nobody is safe does opinion turn harsher and more realistic: On both continents today opinion is divided between appeasers and resisters in proportions that reflect the fact that Americans *know* that they are the targets of Islamist terrorism while Europeans can think otherwise for a time. Madrid was not September 11 because Europeans still lack a common identity. For non-Spaniards it was a foreign affair. But with the murder of more than 300 Russian children in Beslan, the kidnapping of the two French journalists, and the bombing of the Australian embassy in Indonesia—all within a week of each other—it is plain that the Islamist terrorists have declared war on the entire non-Islamic world and apostate regimes in the Islamic world. Nobody is safe. And since such terrorism will continue to strike country after country, the political climate throughout Europe is likely to become harsher and more realistic—and so more receptive to the greater realism of American policy.

The recent poll on transatlantic attitudes conducted for the German Marshall Fund confirms both halves of this argument. It shows that Europeans increasingly reject American leadership and favor the rise of a European superpower—though not if it means spending more on defense. That certainly suggests an unrealistic mind set. But it also suggests that the divisions between the two continents are neither so virulent nor so clear as the debates between elites suggest. Thus, there are broad differences between

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European countries and America on such questions as the value of the war in Iraq and deference to international institutions. But divisions within Europe and America are important too. Majorities in some European countries, for instance, share the "American" view that they would bypass the U.N. if their nations' vital interests were at stake. Perhaps the most significant finding may be that Democrats have an almost identical outlook to most Europeans. In other words, the division of opinion runs through every nation and both continents—and it is likely to react similarly to similar events: in this case, further attacks by Al Qaeda.

If that is so, then the value of the American alliance to European opinion will increase, not only because it is likely to share the views of most Americans (to become, so to speak, more Republican and less Tranzi), but also because in serious conflict any sane European wants to be on the American side. The war on Islamist terrorism would provide the solidarity once supplied by the Cold War; "Europeanism" would decline, and Atlanticism revive. In those circumstances, the United States would be able to take a much more active role in alliance diplomacy. Until recently Washington has relied on Britain, Italy, Poland, and other Atlantic-minded powers to represent its interests in E.U. affairs. But Washington can no longer afford this passivity. That does not mean a Kerry-like anxiety to please the leading European states at the expense of our interests. Quite the contrary. We must intervene for such purposes in order to ensure that the proposed E.U. defense structure does not compromise NATO's role as the monopoly supplier of European defense. Or to obstruct a common European foreign policy that seems likely to prevent old friends from joining the United States in some future coalition of the willing. Or, more broadly, to encourage the E.U. to develop along Atlanticist lines and away from any role as a "counterweight" to the United States.

If that is to be accomplished conclusively, however, then the United States must also encourage those powers that share its distrust of postmodern structures—plainly Britain, Denmark, the Netherlands, and less plainly the Baltic states and some East European countries—to seek more liberal constitutional arrangements within the E.U. Until now, it has consistently discouraged any such resistance to whatever was described by Brussels as "integration." Even a modest version of such reforms in the E.U. would be a major setback for the Tranzis—their Grenada—and have knock-on effects on their other projects such as the International Criminal Court. And, of course, the mere fact that the E.U. and the U.S. were fighting the war on terror on more American terms would tend, as after September 11, to reduce Tranzi power and influence throughout Acronymia—just as the current Iraqi troubles have helped them. Gulliver would give some Yahoo energy to the overrefined Houyhnhnms of Europe—and maybe get some patience and subtlety in return. That in turn would speed the defeat of the Islamists.

If, however, Mr. Steyn is right in his pessimism—and that's the way to bet—then the United States will face a difficult future as a military superpower continually frustrated in middling matters by the resistance of international bodies. Europe and America will divide into two separate civilizations—the Anglosphere (minus England, plus India) and the Holy Secular Empire—uncomfortably housing a growing Muslim minority. Even in America, liberal democracy will be gradually transformed into a politically correct judicial oligarchy on Tranzi lines. The political atmosphere of both sides of the Atlantic will obstruct and delay the inevitable defeat of Islamist terrorism. And Gulliver, undefeated and undefeatable, will nonetheless apply for entry into the new euthanasia program brought in following a Supreme Court decision that cited judicial opinions from the International Human Rights Court Court in Harare.

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Assoluta

by Laura Jacobs

Divas are a dime a dozen. Pop singers are divas, actresses are divas, models, anchor ladies, female CEOs, even women who snap at cabbies are divas. The term "diva" has its most revered usage at the opera, where it is enshrined in a spectral aria—"Casta diva"—sung by Norma, the title character in Bellini's masterpiece. Norma is a Druid priestess who, duty and desire at swords' points, goes up in flames for love, a flashpoint you might say, for the kind of power that now dominates in America: dark power, chthonic power, the id simmering, "issues" spitting, entitlement and empowerment stirring in the brew. There is something of witchcraft about divas. Singers plant themselves onstage (think of Judy Garland's wrestler's stance) and pull up their arias through the ground, the gut, the ribcage, the clavicle, the throat. Incanting, decanting, they obsess about phlegm and sediment, fearing they will open their mouths and hear nothing, the cauldrons below gone cold (Kathleen Battle, a diva well named, threw fits if anyone looked at her lips). Temper is never plucked from blue sky.

Great female ballet dancers are not called divas, or even prima donnas, though they may act like ones. They are ballerinas. Or prima ballerinas. Or prima ballerina assoluta—it doesn't go any higher. And yet these glorious titles have gone out of use. It is now only and simply ballerina.

Ballet dancers pull up too. It is part of the technique. The five positions of ballet—positions of the feet and the alignment of the body over them—are primary placements, architectural foundations. But they are not dug in, planted. In any position, weight must hover, angelically poised, above the balls of the feet. In this way the dancer is ready, like a dandelion puff in a breeze, to lift in any direction—light, effortless, a different kind of power. Classical ballet is not earth and fire, it is water and air—the dewpoint of a culture. Ballerinas are not bitches throbbing out molten wants and recriminations (though in postmodern ballets they're often asked to stomp and throb). They are cultivated like pearls or white peacocks or royal roses. They are trained on the luminous. National treasure and north star, the ballerina's floating authority is informed by all the arts—music, painting, poetry, history, fashion, as well as *la danse*—with a little Euclidian geometry as underpinning. Like Cinderella, mothwing and spider's web are her adornments, a toilette of tulle and tiara. As for the fairies, sylphs, wilis, sprites that are so often her subject, well, today we understand these folklore apparitions are not so much tricks of the eye as they are events of energy, thermodynamic transmutations—flash, blur, ripple, wave—a healthy wood or meadow in a split-second bliss of iridescence, a shiver of pleasure escaping. This is what a ballerina must be, an event of pure unplanted energy, and why she is so rare.

Today, the term itself is slippery. The general public thinks any girl who makes

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a living in toe shoes is a ballerina. Subscribers, a bit smarter, assume that the top of the roster—"principal dancers"—are the ballerinas, though it is wrong to think they are simply corps girls grown up: the mark of ballerinadom is often perceived way back in the academy, where one girl is already different, more, than her peers. Balletomanes like to play with the word, sometimes using it to describe an aura of romance or theatricality: "He's not strong," I once heard it said of the French dancer Alexander Proia, who wore his hair like Liszt, "but he's a real ballerina." Then again, it's not unusual to hear a 'mane despair, deadly serious, of a major ballet company: "*But they have no ballerinas*." Which is not to say the company is without stars. You can be a star without being a ballerina (just look at ABT's Paloma Herrera), and today there are many ballet stars trouping the world's stages (just not many ballerinas).

The late David Daniel, a dance and music critic of easy erudition, had a particularly withering phrase for the classical dancing he was seeing at the end of the twentieth century. "But you know, dear," he would say, "it isn't dancing. It's what I call"—and here the poison pause—"*doing* ballet." That glib verb redolent of corporate lunches and busy-bee lists—to do. For David there was an unbridgeable difference between dancing and doing, between artistry and athletics, art and airs, a dancer answering the history enculturated in her muscles and one who hears little, who gives a silhouette of a performance, a facsimile, all steps accounted for, a faceful of agony or ecstasy pulled on cue. It was the difference, finally, between going to the theater and staying home. "Have-a-nice-day ballet" is what the critic Joel Lobenthal calls it—dancing that is shiny, smiley, skinny.

In the seventies there was a corps dancer at American Ballet Theatre named Fanchon Cordell. I never saw her perform with the company, but I met her at the ballet studio of Albertine Maxwell in Nashville, Tennessee, where she took daily class with the advanced students while on a two-week visit home. Her presence was electric. We all worked harder trying to pull up to her level, to learn from her, secretly hoping to hear an encouraging word from this young woman who was The Real Thing. I vividly recall an afternoon in the dressing room when we gathered around and she talked about ABT, specifically, of Natalia Makarova and Gelsey Kirkland, each having joined the company in the early seventies. Makarova's awesome flow, Kirkland's heartbreaking ardor—the arrivals of these two women, Cordell explained, were a huge jolt to the company's female dancers. Everyone, she said, worked harder. Makarova and Kirkland, each in her own way, showed how much more one could give.

What is that *more*? With Kirkland it was a commitment that came across the footlights, a mighty myopia in that babydoll face. Kirkland was trained at the School of American Ballet and came of age at the New York City Ballet. Rebellious since a child, she couldn't see her way to George Balanchine's rule, "Don't think, just dance." Not thinking was not in her nature. Kirkland joined ABT where her relentless thinking about her dancing, her seeking after its soul with coach after coach, her quest for meanings in a wordless form, all this desire gave charging grandeur to her dewy pointillist precision. Walk into the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at the Lincoln Center Library and somewhere in the room, on one of the video screens, a young dancer will be viewing the 1978 Kirkland-Baryshnikov performance of *Theme and Variations*. Misha's wonderful in it, but he's not the reason they're watching. It is Kirkland, dancing in the crystal castle of her technique, meticulous, swift, a silvery joust, her French twist gleaming, her hummingbird heart full and pumping. You feel the moat of air around her, see the prismatic transcendence within, her energy so much higher, hotter, more pure than Misha's. "Gelsey always looked like she was beamed in from another planet," my husband remembers. "She was like a hologram." Exactly. She *was* from another planet, each performance a visitation, a fresh search for

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answers. Indeed, one of Kirkland's early answers was Makarova—inspiration and jolt. Kirkland admits she imitated Makarova's seamless line; she could not imitate her Vaganova Academy training, hence the need for teachers.

Makarova didn't lay her heart so plainly before the audience, perhaps because she'd grown up with answers. At the Imperial School of the Mariinsky Theatre, questions of meaning ("Is Prince Siegfried reading Shakespeare or Lermontov?") were debated after class. And Makarova knew—because it's in the Kirov curriculum, hence conscience, to know—every interlocking level of theater, from the right way to breathe, to how to rescue a step, to the dramatic verities of the great ballets, for instance, that the role of Giselle is not a series of set pieces but a single phrase that goes from sun to sun, a long arc of ever more out-of-body implosions (yes, the ballerina must dance a contradiction). Where Kirkland's Giselle was a psychosexual fever, all that anxiety and longing compressed, Makarova's was a kinetic surrender, an artist bringing a supreme simplicity into the darkened passage of Act Two. It was a performance built on *ballon* and on the catching momentums of a breathing *épaulement*, so soft it seemed to be all essence, the murmuring energy of Kirov generations: illumined, lunar, a rising fealty, then sinking into darkness, the woods, which is of course what happens in *Giselle*. At the ballet, imagination and energy are the same shape, the same property. When these women were onstage you never wondered, as one so often does today, why they were the standard, i.e., ballerinas.

This spring season at the Metropolitan Opera House, ABT staged a new production of *Raymonda*, Marius Petipa's full-length ballet of 1898. It's a strange ballet, famous for its glorious score by Alexander Glazunov, and infamous for its story, the consensus being that there is not enough of one (Balanchine called the story "nonsense"). In Act One, Raymonda celebrates her birthday; pines for her betrothed, Jean de Brienne, who is off fighting the Crusades; receives a tapestry portrait he has sent of himself; then takes a nap and dreams first of Jean and then of the Saracen chief, Abderakhman, who is wooing her in Jean's absence. In Act Two Jean comes home and wins Raymonda back, defeating the Saracen in a duel. Act Three is the marriage celebration. *Raymonda* is a bit like *The Sleeping Beauty* (the dream scene works like *Beauty*'s vision scene; the male lead arrives late) only without the fairy tale balance, the twin peaks of Lilac Fairy versus Carabosse. In fact, except for the duel, *Raymonda* seems to go from valley to valley, the score less a narrative with a feisty through-line than a collection of ballads, reveries, dreams, hummingly lovely. Ballet emerges from the quiet of a culture, and the ballerina from a quiet of her own creation; you could say *Raymonda* is about nothing less than this. It is a landscape of Raymonda's contentments, desires, and fears, her interior life in a tutu. The role has five solos and four codas, a number that looms, and all are laid bare, no plot twists or mad scenes from which to draw color or camouflage. She's alone with the character of her dancing.

It's fascinating, in a bad way, how long a shortened full-length ballet can feel. As is the trend at both ABT and NYCB, this new *Raymonda* was wedged around one intermission, making for long sits on either side. What story there once was is now so cut, futzed-with, and abridged, the ballet feels more like a *Raymonda* hit parade. But at least it's pretty. Zack Brown brings a touch of twilight to his Arthurian sets, veiled layerings in frost blue, lavender, persimmon—William Morris Medieval—and it works against the concert-version flatness of the production, plumping it up. His costumes remind me of Adrian's wonderful work for Lerner & Loewe's *Camelot*—"confectioner's gothic" it was called. Disturbingly, Anna-Marie Holmes and Kevin McKenzie have done away with the symbolic tapestry that prompts Raymonda's dream. In this version, Jean de Brienne is no longer crusading during Act One; he's made it to Raymonda's

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birthday where he hangs around so long he doesn't seem special anymore. Meanwhile, Raymonda never has to long for him, or suffer she may have lost him, a fear that leaves her naked to the Saracen. Now she's just another dumb birthday girl. The whole emotional plumb is lost, the weight of the place Raymonda visits in her dream, in her heart. Gone too an epic sensibility, the land waiting for Jean's return. So much pointless alteration here, or perhaps preemptive, as if to protect ABT's principal women, and maybe its audience, from a role that's too artistically revealing.

Of the performances I saw, ABT's Raymondas were all over the map. Xiomara Reyes, a cloying dancer whose principal status baffles me, was without nuance or a glint of understanding. ABT's roster has always included one or another of these chirpy soubrettes, Junior Mints for the "isn't she cute?" clucks in the audience. But to cast this type as Raymonda is ridiculous. And what does it say to the dancers below? That a Reyes Raymonda is good enough for management? That's the standard? Gillian Murphy, whom the company is promoting with great gusto, did better. She had pluck, more lightness than is her norm, and gave us . . . not a Raymonda, really, but a gutsy Aurora. Murphy is athletic, a natural turner, and the speed she brings to *pirouettes, fouettés, chaînés* is her specialty, so if it's speed you want, Murphy's your girl. But when she isn't pulled taut to the vertical, as dancers are during turns, problems blink at you: the blockiness in the body, knees that don't always straighten, the weak leg extension *en avant* ("forward"—in sheer physics the most difficult of all extensions, stumpy when badly done, a prophetic unfolding when strong), and then there's the stunning lack of melody in her dancing. Many think Murphy a virtuoso (it's the turns), but to my eye the dancing is clotted, technically thick. If the head cheerleader became a ballet dancer, she'd be Gillian Murphy.

Nina Ananiashvili was my third Raymonda. We first saw Ananiashvili in the 1980s, when the Bolshoi came to town with a slew of ballerinas. Ananiashvili was the youngest, and so leggy, linear, she was embraced as more western than the rest. In the last twenty years she's become an international star, guesting here and there, though recently she's settled in at ABT. Ananiashvili continues to wear her Bolshoi background lightly (she never had that eagle-has-landed Bolshoi swoop and drive), and this continues to be her charm. Older now, there's a childlike, coloring-book quality to her dancing. All the steps are there, but mostly outline, airily done, impulsive patches of color within. Ananiashvili can be quite brilliant—her allegro in *Raymonda* glittered—but she doesn't work deep in *plié* and this robs her of roundness, makes her seem a bit stick-figure. Yet this too is part of her charm, that dash of naïveté, the way it simplifies, sweetens, her jet-set theatricality. When Ananiashvili dances with her longtime partner Julio Bocca they're like two old troupers taking their art, or the best that's left of it, to the provinces—except the province is New York City. And still they're irresistible. Is Ananiashvili a ballerina? Her fans, a formidable claque, would howl at the mere question. Certainly there's nothing exploratory about Ananiashvili's dancing, and it's not kinetically interesting, but the way she catches her own light—it's a late-day sun—and shines it into the audience, that too is power.

No one, however, had the resonance in *Raymonda* that came from a soloist only two years with ABT, Veronika Part. Trained at the Imperial School of the Mariinsky Theatre, Part was dancing ballerina roles with the Kirov by the late nineties. When the company brought its *Jewels* to the Met in 2002, she danced "Emeralds" as if born in its forest. Later that week, her Saturday matinee *Swan Lake* was epiphanal: there were still depths in Odette. At that performance, the critic Don Daniels said New York hadn't seen such a *Swan Lake* since Makarova's. He was talking about something in Part's physical nature, her freedom within a phrase, a strength that allows her a further path. If a

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ballerina must show us something that we've never seen before—and I think she must—than Part is the most important ballerina dancing today. And she isn't even a principal.

Part never danced the lead in *Raymonda*, but stole the show as Henrietta, one of Raymonda's friends (the beautiful friend who may secretly dream of the convent). At ABT's opening night gala, an evening of razzle-dazzle, the *Raymonda* Act Two Pas de Sept took everyone by surprise, because of Part. She didn't seem to realize it was a gala. She was at a different party, the one for Raymonda. Her solo rolled out like a song *pianissimo*, as when you sing to yourself outdoors and alone, allowing yourself a sudden syncopation, a floating hold, a deeper low note (as in sinking to the floor) that returns you to a wider sky. Deeper, lower, lighter, higher, stronger, softer, stranger—Part's dynamic range is amazing, opulent, and this solo shivered with little graces, time-space undulations. The audience was silent, stunned, not the usual gala response where screams are the order of the evening, but the usual response to Part. She is commanding in every way.

Dance critics don't talk much about bodies anymore, or rather, female bodies. It seems to have been deemed politically incorrect, impolite, as if it's unfair to discuss something that can't be changed. But the body is where it all begins and Part's is one of the wonders of ballet today. Actually, I think she scares people. The beauty of her proportions aside (and feet bunheads dream on), Part does not conform to ballet's standard of sinewy thinness. She's 5'8", tall for a ballerina, and her figure has a nineteenth-century cadence, an hourglass allure. Her legs, long and straight as they are, boast continental curves in the thigh and calf, not the cut muscles of a runner, but grand-piano curves, planes rounded in rosewood. She has long arms set in wide shoulders, and this, coupled with her Russian training—that legendary calm at the clavicle, the Romanesque vaults in the port de bras—gives her enormous breadth and play above the bust, the reach of a huntress. She has a bosom, not big by civilian measure, but for ballet a downy décolletage—next to all those flat chests she's a little bit snowbound. And then the snow princess face: white white skin, black hair, a young Ava Gardner, a big white rose. She's completely voluptuous.

A little too voluptuous, actually, when she joined ABT in the fall of 2002. Part made her ABT debut at New York's City Center in the hallowed role of *Symphony in C*, second movement. The audience was packed with *tout le monde*, and the tone of the place was a mix of anticipation, admiration, and ill will (jealousies stir outside a company as well as within). Part had put on weight, perhaps ten pounds, and ABT did not have a principal man to support her properly. Instead of borrowing a tall man from another company, and in a most unchivalrous manner, ABT sent her out to the hounds with a reed of a cavalier. Part was heroic. No, she didn't have the freedom she needed in the middle register, but that lotus-blossom aplomb, the extension *en avant*—an ivory scepter!—the pacific delicacy in the wrist and hands, the high horizon of the bust, one saw the endowments in relief, not the engine but the icecaps, and the vast poetic landscape spread before and beneath her.

By all accounts, hers included, it was a tough transition. All ballet companies are competitive, but where Kirov dancers have grown up together as family, coddled and coached the whole way, the ethic at ABT is sink-or-swim. Isolated by language, her outsider status, a spate of small injuries, her seriousness in rehearsal plus a tendency to tears, not to mention the usual resentments of rivals, Part was slow to climb, and ABT doled her out with an eyedropper. But artists draw strength from isolation, and Part's key solos were astonishments. Diaghilev's *éttonez-moi* meets Vreeland's "Give them what they never knew they wanted." Who'd have thought one could love the third shade in *La Bayadère*, the most tortured of three solo variations? Part took what usually looks like a dread physics test—all those delayed *développés* and dead stops in fifth—and made

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it seem a cat-and-mouse with moonbeams. Legato is her bowl of cream. And speaking of those leg extensions, correct, strong, long, they come up like a law of nature, almost animal, and stay like light. At intermission, a young dancer in the audience called Part's *développé* "3D," and she was right, it's not a step when Part does it, but a glory. Even in the heavily gowned, secondary role of *Romeo and Juliet*'s Lady Capulet, Part found her way to a couplet. Opera glasses were trained on her hands, which had a Renaissance elegance, a painterly precision—pure theater. Part doesn't toss steps off, she takes the ballet in. As Queen of the Dryads in *Don Quixote*, in those swinging Italian *fouettés*, she seems to make an untouchable turret of that return perch in attitude, looking out the arched window, amber and amethyst, of her arm in high fifth.

"Veronika is never empty," said the great Kirov ballerina and now ABT coach, Irina Kolpakova, knocking a fist to her heart. "There is always more."

Finally, this spring at the Met, fit and slimmed in her fourth New York season with ABT, Part was moved into the spotlight. The ballet was *Mozartiana*, a company premiere for ABT, and the centerpiece of the company's Balanchine evening, an homage to the master's centennial year. Choreographed in 1981, *Mozartiana* is Balanchine's last masterpiece, a ballet about reverence, dedication to an art one loves, and to the life-consuming requirements of such dedication—hence the four little girls, then the four big girls, then the ballerina. And yet audiences don't love this ballet. Perhaps the kalaidoscope Balanchine makes with the number four, symmetrically opening then closing space, is too mathematical a Mozart, too formal or distant a view. Perhaps the ballet-recital gradation, little, bigger, biggest, taps into a collective unconscious of endless recitals long past and good riddance. Perhaps the ballet within the ballet, the superb *pas de deux* with its storm pitch of drama, its circling paths and tiny cliff, is too abstract. Or maybe it's the whisper of that black tulle veiled over white, the knowledge that no amount of love will hold us here, that we must each leave in our time. Watching *Mozartiana*, it can feel as if Balanchine composed it not from the ground, but from above, looking down on the stage. Suzanne Farrell, the woman on whom it was made, described the ballet with words from the Lord's Prayer: "on earth as it is in heaven."

Meanings knit up in *Mozartiana*. The bow/curtsy that ends every ballet class, an homage to the teacher and to the privilege of dancing ballet, is called *révérence*. It is but a deeper, more elaborate version of the bow that lives in the Baroque (when ballet was born), a point made in the ballet's third movement, the Menuet. Balanchine connects class to classicism, and like leaves or fruit falling, drops that bow lightly, poignantly, all through the ballet. It's a little Mozartian world, chilly then sunny then trembling, built on the emotions of women and the inspiration of the one woman, the ballerina (and in his feeling for women, Mozart was right up there with Balanchine). The Gigue, always cast with a slight young male virtuoso (in black satin knickers—the trouser role!) could be *Figaro*'s Cherubino singing of love's conundrums. And after all, the music itself is a *révérence*: Tchaikovsky orchestrated these Mozart melodies out of love for the great Amadeus.

Mozartiana is about endings and beginnings. Notice the steps. Skips, hops, jetés—schoolyard steps, tossed like seeds. And look at the way Balanchine takes first-year ballet steps and devolves them for the ballerina, almost deconstructs them, the way one must in the beginning, to learn them. Those *arabesque-passé-passés* in the opening Preghiera (Prayer), like steps on stilts; the slow-motion *chaînés* in the ballerina's solos; the *échappés* done with a scissory half turn—these simple steps scaled greatly acquire grandeur, like late Matisse cutouts. *Mozartiana is* something to be scaled, and so the prayer at the beginning, the ballerina posed in a garden of little girls, is the invocation before the ascension. This ballerina must be big.

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Maria Calegari, the former NYCB dancer and a Rococo flame in the role herself, staged *Mozartiana* for ABT and chose three women for the lead: Ashley Tuttle, Nina Ananiashvili, and Veronika Part. Tuttle was miscast, too small literally and figuratively. Ananiashvili brought her usual charms to the role, and there were those who liked her *Mozartiana* best, no doubt because it was closer, superficially, to Farrell's. There are physical similarities between the two, for instance, the stork legs with widening thighs. Also, both came to the role older, their *plié* shallower and so their dancing cooler, though Farrell, because of her spontaneity, was always dewy. Ananiashvili is not spontaneous. There were dead spots in her performance, seconds in which she had to wait to begin because she'd finished too soon, on the beat but off the wit. Farrell made even her flubs look witty.

Obviously Farrell's performance of *Mozartiana* is the point of comparison. It was constructed to her strengths—that flying crane scale, her mysterious stamina, her playing with the music, teasing it with a head toss. When the ballet premiered Farrell was thirty-six, a dancer approaching the end of her career, just as Balanchine was nearing the end of his life (he died two years later). It was a time when Farrell's life-long extravagances—her almost religious commitment to dance, her whirlwind abandon—were less acts than inflections. Two hip replacements soon in her future, Balanchine gave Farrell sacred weight in the Preghiera with a series of reverential *temps liés* (a sliding through space in *demi-plié*, here with the hands pressed in prayer). The rest of the role, however, has a skimming brilliance, the hover and flash of a dragonfly. Balanchine had already noted the change in Farrell in 1980: her iconic solo in *Robert Schumann's Davidsbündlertänze* has been called "the Dragonfly." And even as early as the celestial *Chaconne*, in 1976, the Farrell part is principally about pointe, heights, shooting-star extensions—all rays and flares—with minimal *plié* (and then, mostly *plié* on pointe), and the ache of adagio, its palpable cantilena line, receding from her realm. So a leggy, skimming style warms the hearts of fans who want late-Farrell roles performed by late-Farrell types, which is to say, with quixotic late-Farrell alignments (or is it limitations?). It's the treasured memory as judgmental ghost light.

I haven't seen every lead in *Mozartiana* since 1981, but I've seen many, and I've never seen one like Part's, simply monumental. She did it her way from the start, bringing that dynamic amplitude and lyric hearing to Balanchine's tricky simplicities. And Part's cameo glow—she's bonbon beautiful in her black satin bodice—it's crucial to a role in which She is Everything. In the Preghiera, Part was something of the captive princess grieving amid her court of little girls, and something of Mozart's Countess Almaviva, pouring her soul into "Porgi, amor," heartbroken, but why?

"I feel there's some secret in this ballet," Part told *Time Out* magazine in the week before her debut. "I haven't found the answer yet." A ballerina doesn't have to find the answer, only to feel for the secret.

After the Preghiera the ballerina is offstage during the Gigue and Menuet. She returns for the Thème et Variations, a long back and forth between the ballerina and her cavalier, a dialogue that ends in an unusual *pas de deux*, flirtatious play that peaks heatedly, a bit Titania and Oberon, a touch of *Chaconne*, then ends on a thin ledge of repose, an aerie not quite of this world. It was in Part's solos that we began to see phenomenon unfettered, a complete integration of power and delicacy. Part dances in 360 degrees and you see it clearly in *Mozartiana*, where so many steps are cut from their moorings. So much dancing today looks *en face* even when it's not, as if it's happening on a flat screen. This is because dancers are concentrating on what happens to the front of the stage and ahead of their bodies; you'd never know there are eight fixed points on the stage, three of them to the rear. Part dances, as she was trained to, with her shoulders, bust, back, head, and hands, as well as legs and feet. She'll wing a *renversé* around back and her whole being follows—she's not afraid of

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where her momentums will take her, those moment-to-moment displacements, and some of them are outrageous. A lunge into *relevé en arabesque* is a skydive from heaven into a cloud of white tulle—white space she nests in. The moment is impetuous, yes, even frightening in its force (her supporting leg like a downward trajectory) and in the pressure it puts on those long sapling feet that are sometimes soft—but it also feels pulled from her like poetry. Part brings her own gravity onstage.

And her own rules. It would be easy for Part to settle on portrait prettiness. And yet this dancer whose muscles seem fed by some luminous inner spring, and who needs that spring to support her breadth and length in body and limb, is willing to give us physical peril, plunges into risk, just as Farrell did. Some have called Part slow. Well, she's slow like a big cat with a terrific pounce. If anything, the word is sloe—the dark plum of the blackthorn—dancing that is rounded and full. Where Farrell's *Mozartiana* was a strand of sparkling recoveries, Part's is more maiden and minotaur, beauties sloe-ly unspooled. And if Farrell seemed to be lifting away from earth as if to follow Balanchine, Part is still reading this world, her body one with its curves and contours, still hearing its sad chthonic rumbles. It's that "more" Kolpakova spoke of. When Balanchine makes an existential game of *chaînés* turns on a diagonal, throwing a *passé* onto each pointe and slowing them down 'til they're a turning tightrope walk, Part plays her own game. She doesn't wind down to a gawky tick-tock like everyone else does (even Farrell), she creates a sensation: how slow can this go and not fall and still flow? I'll never forget those *chaînés*, like mist on still water, the audience rapt.

We live in a time when strength has come to mean a buttoned-up performance, clean as a gymnastics routine, cool doing ever more two-dimensional, presentational, airtight. This is what people respond to in the dancing of Svetlana Zakharova, Sylvie Guillem, a whiplike dominatrix control that pushes you back in your seat in submission. But when you over-control you lose what is unknown, magical. Part is bucking every trend in ballet. She uses her strength to touch the precarious, to go where others can't or won't. And she shows us everything, making herself vulnerable (and pulling us forward for more). On a smaller scale, so does Roberta Marquez, a South American who danced two *La Bayadères* with ABT and proved, lest we forget, that a balance can be a living, breathing thing. The mysteries of ballet are bound up in its volumes, and artistry in its listening physical harmonics. Part began *Mozartiana* ravishing and ended a little ravished, because she was never not dancing. What more is there?

Swan Lake, of course. Part was awarded one performance, partnered by the young comer Marcelo Gomes, big-limbed, dark, and perfect for her. It was the most awaited casting of the season, and quite a different *Swan Lake* from the one Part danced with the Kirov in 2002. That was a performance of undertows, Part a recessive Odette, the momentums of the role caught in her breast and back, those elemental legs pulling away. In her ABT *Swan Lake*, Part revealed the heart that's been in lambswool these last two years. Here was an emotional Odette, passionately pitched, her narrative flights clear and momentous, and the delicacies, those trilling *entrechat-passés en arrière*, for instance, like water singing. When Odette first allows herself to lean back upon Siegfried's chest, Part tendrils against him in something between rest and wrest. You never forget she's trapped in feathers, in Rothbart's spell. And when Odette approaches Siegfried with a full circling swoop of the arms that pulls her up to pointe, Part powers a whoosh so huge we see the danger of her love—she actually startled Gomes, overwhelmed him— the supernatural size of her, it is the conjuring of the spell blowing through her, white rush and strange heart, Wingwraith. This is imagination, wild and precise, rehearsed and released, big, bigger, biggest. This is Veronika Part, making bliss of the art once again.

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The real Che

by Anthony Daniels

In the Prologue to his recent history of Cuba, Richard Gott, a British journalist of pronounced left-wing sympathies, remembers Ernesto Guevara's arrival at a reception at the Soviet Embassy in Havana in 1963, at which he too was present: "Guevara strode in after midnight, accompanied by a small coterie of friends, bodyguards, and hangers-on, wearing his trademark black beret, and with his shirt open to the waist. He was incredibly beautiful." There is no accounting for taste, of course, and I never had the advantage of seeing Guevara in the flesh. To my mind, however, his appearance in all post-revolutionary photographs of him, save the most famous one by Alberto Korda, is that of a man distinctly unwashed. No doubt this accounts for a proportion of his continuing popularity among youth.

Some purists, or rationalists, might object that one's aesthetic response to Guevara is rather beside the point. The trouble with Hitler was not his absurd appearance, after all, or with Stalin his pockmarked complexion. And yet, if we analyze Guevara's popular appeal more than a third of a century after his timely death, we can see that it is the result of aesthetic and emotional responses rather than rational reflection, responses that are now kept alive by a good dose of commercialism. On one website dedicated to his memory, for example (www.store.che-lives.com), I found twenty-seven different varieties of Guevara T-shirts for sale, including a distressed olive-green one, one with reflective ink, a black one with glitter, and a black one with red glow. New berets were also available, the site announced with an exclamation mark, as if we had all been anxiously waiting for them, as well as baseball and trucker hats, bandannas, keyrings, Zippo lighters, desk clocks, and brooches. In short, Guevara is not so much an historical figure as a tourist destination. And most tourists don't read too deeply into the history of the places they are going to.

This frivolous attitude to Guevara started during his lifetime. Sartre said that Guevara was the most complete man of our time, and he, like Gott, had something like a religious experience on meeting him:

> I heard the door close behind me and I lost, at once, all feeling of my tiredness and an idea of the time. In that office, night does not enter: in those men, in the best of them, they do not feel that sleeping is a natural necessity but a routine from which they have been liberated.

This, surely, would count as one of the three miracles required by the Catholic process of canonization, the abolition of sleep. St. Che of Cuba libre—it has quite a ring about it.

With few exceptions, the devotees of the cult of Guevara know little about him or what he actually stood for. This has always been the case. In 1968, only a year after Guevara's death, a professor of international relations at San Francisco State University,

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John Gerassi, published a collection of Guevara's speeches and essays, in whose introduction he relates the impact news of the death of Guevara had upon his students:

> On October 9, 1967, the first news of Ernesto Che Guevara's alleged death reached the United States. . . . I was approached by a nineteen-year-old coed. She had tears in her eyes and a "Make Love Not War" button on her breast. "You don't really believe it, do you?" she asked. "I mean, he couldn't really be dead, could he?" . . . [T]here were many liberals and many pacifists [in the class], in addition to the radicals. And yet to all . . . the news of Che's possible death was very upsetting and very personal. Che had obviously caught their imagination. They respected and admired him. They knew very little about his life. . . . But they knew enough to know that he was an idealist. . . . Thus it became apparent to me, as we talked that day, that these liberal and pacifist students felt, incredibly, as if Che had died for them.

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. No doubt the students would angrily have disavowed any lingering influence of Christianity upon their thought.

The latest and propagandistically most powerful product of the Guevara cult is a film of Guevara's *Motorcycle Diaries* by the Brazilian director Walter Salles. It relies for its effect upon the fact that audiences will all know a minimum about Guevara: for example, that he was a social revolutionary who died in the jungles of Bolivia, and never made a penny for himself. But they will otherwise know little of his actual opinions or actions, and will not have read his tedious and inflexibly dogmatic speeches and writings. It is as if someone were to make a film about Adolf Hitler by portraying him as a vegetarian who loved animals and was against unemployment. This would be true, but again would be rather beside the point.

At the beginning of 1952, while still a medical student, Guevara set out with a companion to tour South America on a decrepit motorcycle. His companion was the Argentinian biochemist Alberto Granado, a few years his senior, who was later to settle in Cuba and also to try unsuccessfully to foment a guerrilla movement in his native Argentina, at Castro's and Guevara's instigation. The film is based on Guevara's diaries, and also those of Granado, published in 1978 in Cuba under the title *Con el Che por Sudamérica*. A shot of Granado as he now is, at the very end of the film, portrays him as a wise, serene, and far-seeing old man. He acted as adviser to the filmmakers throughout, so it is hardly surprising that the portrayal of the two voyagers is sympathetic.

It would be difficult to make a film in the landscapes of South America that was not visually appealing. Having travelled quite extensively there, I found myself at once seized by a desire to return to their awe-inspiring magnificence. The two principal actors in the film, the Mexican García Bernal and the Argentinian Rodrigo de la Serna (himself a second cousin of Guevara's), play the two young men extremely well, within the limits of the schematic script.

The message of the film is very clear. Guevara is a large-hearted and charming young man of the Argentinian bourgeoisie whose youthful journey is a kind of *éducation sentimentale*. He is forced into his later activities by his deep feeling for the suffering, cruelty, and exploitation that he witnesses en route. There he rebelled; he could do no other.

Actually, in his book Granado lets slip that the pair of them are rebellious by temperament. For some reason other than a knowledge of sociological conditions prevailing in South America, they were born not to conform to the bourgeois mores of their environment. After visiting a doctor friend in a small provincial town in Argentina:

> [Guevara] and I remarked that this was pretty much what our futures would have been—me a small town pharmacist, he a doctor treating

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> the allergies of wealthy ladies—if it weren't for that certain something that made us rebel.

When they reach Machu Picchu, Granado tells Guevara that one day he'll start a political party that is pro-Indian that, by winning elections, will revolutionize the politics of Latin America. Guevara, at this stage supposedly still a young innocent bourgeois, replies "Revolution without firing a shot? You're crazy." Then Granado recalls an occasion, ten years previously when Guevara was thirteen, when he, Granado, had proposed to him to join a demonstration against the military government of General Farrel in Argentina. The sweet and supposedly innocent Guevara replied, "Go out and march unarmed so they can beat the shit out of us? Not on your life. I'm not going without a piece [i.e., a gun]." Granado reflects: "Ten years on the outlook is the same—the revolution is won with gunfire. Two different periods, but a single attitude to life."

As it happens, I have noticed how, in the personality cults of communist leaders, from Ceausescu to Kim Il Sung, there is always the legend that, for their very accession to consciousness, they struggled against oppression and for social justice, taking part in violent pro-communist demonstrations. This, of course, is supposed to demonstrate their extraordinary, almost preternatural, prescience rather than arrested development; be that as it may, it is clear from what Granado writes that Guevara's violent revolutionism derives as much from his temperament as anything he saw on the supposedly educative journey.

In the film, the two young men set out from Buenos Aires and are soon in the vast, empty open spaces of Argentina. We feel their sense of absolute freedom, the wind in their hair is the wind in our hair, and the cares of the big city are behind both them and us. Of course, before they started out, they had had to get visas to cross borders. Guevara wrote in his diary: "So began the monotonous business of chasing visas, certificates and documents, that is to say, of overcoming the many hurdles modern nations erect in the paths of would-be travellers." You wouldn't altogether guess from this, or from the film, that Guevara was soon to advocate a political and economic system that would make such journeys as his completely impossible for anyone who came after him, or that the central control he advocated over each and every individual would of necessity keep them within a very tiny radius. In this, Guevara was absolutely typical of the messianic bourgeois, whether of reformist or revolutionary stripe: he wants to make sure that no one ever again lives as well as he has lived. Inside every rebel, there's a tyrant trying to get out.

The film soon gives us to understand that anyone who lives in comfort is necessarily cold-hearted, selfish, and unwelcoming, while anyone poor is—*ex officio*, as it were—generous, selfless and hospitable. In fact, both books make clear that the two young men, who were in essence spongers, were frequently treated quite generously by members of the bourgeoisie, and even by the police, to whom they often turned for food and accommodation. Moreover, they expected such generosity as their due: were they not youthful and adventurous, and did not the world, therefore, owe them a meal and a bed for the night? They had a sense of entitlement because they were who they were. In Guevara's diaries, there is this—to me—very unpleasant passage:

> The main task at hand was getting to Iquitos. . . . The first person we hit on was the mayor, someone called Cohen; we had heard a lot about him, that he was Jewish as far as money was concerned but a good sort. There was no doubt he was tightfisted; the problem was whether he was a good sort. He palmed us off to the shipping agents, who in turn sent us to speak with the captain, who was kindly enough, promising the huge concession of charging us third-class fares and letting us travel in first. We weren't happy with this. . . . [T]hen the second-in-command . . . promised to help. . . . [Later] we came across

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> him, [and] he said he's secured a great deal for us: as a special favor to him, the captain had agreed to charge us third-class fares and let us travel in first. Big deal.

There is a querulous tone of thwarted entitlement in this. I am reminded of the time I travelled on a river boat on the Niger, and the few young white passengers aboard, who would all have espoused the most correct of political views, insisted on being allowed on to the first-class deck because they were white, and therefore entitled to comfort. So what if they had paid only a third-class fare? Big deal.

Time and again Granado and Guevara are outraged that they are not taken straight to the bosom of whomever they are begging from. They have no hesitation in lying and even stealing. No doubt these are youthful failings, but they are not admirable, and easily become habits.

As with all film adaptations of books, the script sometimes takes liberties. When the pair of them see Machu Picchu for the first time, we hear Guevara saying, "The Incas had mathematics, astronomy, medicine [translated in the British subtitles as brain surgery]. The Spanish had gunpowder." Guevara doesn't actually say this in his book. It is the politically correct version of the famous apothegm in *The Third Man* about five hundred years of democracy in Switzerland producing the cuckoo clock. Suppose someone said, "The Spanish had writing, philosophy, and law. The Amerindians had feather headdresses." Would this not be a travesty that brought wrath to the hearts of every right-thinking person? Why, then, does such a travesty pass unremarked when it is in the other direction?

In one scene, the pair are taking their leave of a cultivated, Marxist Peruvian doctor who has put them up for a time. The doctor has a secret vice: he writes. He has written a novel, and asks Granado and Guevara their opinion of it just before they depart. They think it is terrible. Granado tries to find something nice to say about it, but Guevara speaks the truth. His words are reported thus in the chapter of Granado's book entitled "Ernesto Cannot Tell a Lie":

> "Look, Doctor, it's not a good book. . . . [T]o me it's unbelievable that a Marxist scholar like yourself would describe only the negative side of the Indian's psychology. It's a pessimistic book that doesn't seem to have come from the pen of either a scientist or a communist."

In the film, Guevara's criticism from a Marxist point of view is downplayed to the point of obliteration. He criticizes the book stylistically instead. We don't want the audience to think that Guevara, far from being a romantic figure of the kind with whom they might identify, was actually or incipiently a hardened and rigid dogmatist.

Perhaps the most distorted scenes are the crucial ones in the film. Granado and Guevara have gone to a leprosarium on a tributary of the Peruvian Amazon, run by a doctor and some nuns. The lepers live on one side of the river, the staff on the other. Granado and Guevara break with local tradition and refuse to wear gloves when they examine the lepers, thereby expressing their solidarity with them. The nuns, by contrast, dispense a stony charity. They even refuse to give food to the lepers who don't attend mass. The two young men are outraged, though denying food or goods to those who don't conform ideologically has long been a practice of Communist regimes, including Cuba's. This irony, we may be sure, was lost on 99.9 percent of the people who have seen the film, and the director did nothing to point it out.

The staff of the leprosarium throws a party for Guevara's twenty-fourth birthday. In the film, Guevara leaves the party midway through and swims across the mile-wide river in the pitch dark to be with the lepers on the other bank, as another expression of solidarity with the downtrodden and oppressed, in contradistinction to the rich and privileged. The lepers, soon recognizing his gesture, cheer him over to their bank of the river. The scene implies that the

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leprosarium, like the world in general, is divided into two: the good downtrodden and the bad downtreaders. In the books, however, Guevara swims across the river two days after his party, during daylight, and arrives on the other bank three miles distant from where the lepers live. Moreover, he swims the river more as an athletic feat than as a political gesture. In other words, the film manipulates the books, which themselves are not unmanipulative, to make its point.

The lepers give Granado and Guevara such a hearty send-off in the film that no casual viewer would notice that, while Granado and Guevara leave, the nuns stay behind to look after the lepers. In fact, though no one notices it, Guevara is to lepers what Princess Diana is to AIDS patients. She used to hug people in hospital with AIDS; Guevara shakes hands with lepers without wearing gloves. But he is no more deeply committed to them than Princess Diana was to patients with AIDS. Lepers and AIDS-sufferers are or were walk-on parts in their respective psychodramas.

The film clearly intends to suggest that Guevara was a youthful idealist, and that his idealism—so generous, so disarming—was the source of his later opinions and activities, such as his liberal and open-handed signing of death sentences after perfunctory trials, his support of regimes that had killed millions and scores of millions, and his wish that much of the population of the world should be immolated in a nuclear war for the sake of an alleged point of principle. The film is thus the cinematic equivalent of the Che Guevara T-shirt; it is morally monstrous and emotionally trivial.

In one sense, and one sense alone, Guevara remains eternally youthful: his ideas are irredeemably adolescent. They have all the puritan priggishness of adolescent fervor. He insisted that something that he called the New Man should be "constructed," "built," or "developed." This New Man was to be utterly unselfish, and work only for the sake of the whole of mankind, and not for himself. Indeed, the construction of the New Man was the fundamental purpose of the revolution.

> A socialist economy without communist morals does not interest me. We fight poverty but we also fight alienation. One of the fundamental aims of Marxism is to eliminate material interest, the factor of "individual self-interest" and profit from man's psychological motivations.

Note that what does not interest him should not exist, surely a manifestation if not of material self-interest, at least of egotism on a pretty large scale. Of course, Guevara's adolescent idea was also Marx's adolescent idea: "for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness [i.e., that of the selfless New Man] the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary." In order that the New Man should emerge, Guevara advocated the most drastic centralization of all power and decision-making, which would make the Soviet Union by comparison look like the epitome of laissez-faire economics. You don't have to be much of a political theorist to understand what his proposed centralization of everything would entail from the point of view of individual freedom.

But where did his rage for the New Man come from? What was so very wrong with the Old Man? This rage is already detectable in the supposedly free-wheeling *Motorcycle Diaries*. Reflecting on his visit to a huge copper mine in Chile, Guevara says:

> Cold efficiency and impotent resentment go hand in hand in the big mine, linked in spite of the hatred by a common necessity to live, on the one hand, and to speculate on the other. . . . [W]e will see whether one day, some miner will take up his pick in pleasure and go and poison his lungs with conscious joy. They say that's what it's like over there, where the red blaze that now lights up the world comes from.

The New Man, then, already exists in the

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Soviet Union, where happy miners of the Don Basin work for the sheer joy of being useful to the inhabitants of the socialist motherland. One doesn't know whether to laugh or cry. Yet this was the foundation, indeed the whole, of Guevara's philosophy, politics, and economics.

One thing is certain: Guevara's desire for the development of the New Man did not emerge from his empirical experience of actual men. In the *Motorcycle Diaries*, he meets many excellent and indeed magnificent men, rich and poor alike. Guevara's desire for the development of the New Man, I believe, comes from his need to control the lives of others, his urge to power. With unique lack of self-knowledge, with an absolute absence of irony, he describes the character of Valdivia, the conquistador of Chile:

> Valdivia's actions symbolize man's indefatigable thirst to take control of a place where he can exercise total control. . . . He belonged to that special class of men the species produces every so often, in whom a craving for limitless power is so extreme that any suffering to achieve it seems natural.

Could there be a better description of Guevara's career itself?

In presenting Guevara as a romantic figure, generous and compassionate rather than ruthlessly priggish and self-centered, and by suggesting that he has anything to teach us other than negatively, the director is guilty of mendacity of a very high order. The film is an exercise in moral frivolity and exhibitionism, self-congratulation, of course, opportunism. It should sell as well as Guevara T-shirts.

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In search of Don Quixote

by Martin Greenberg

O celebrated Author! O fortunate Don Quixote! O famous Dulcinea! O comical Sancho Panza! Together and separately may you live an infinite number of years, bringing pleasure and widespread diversion to the living.
—Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, II, 40

Don Quixote is the mother of all novels. Or as Lionel Trilling put it, "All prose fiction is a variation on the theme of *Don Quixote*." That theme is the clash between what we think, or imagine, or wish is so, and what is so. The clash is a matter of differing perspectives: personal, intellectual, class, cultural, historical. The consciousness of perspective—that I see things this way and you see things that way—is a form of self-consciousness. It develops in the riper stages of a civilization, if it ever develops. *Don Quixote* is one marker of that development in ours. Perspective consciousness is an advance in humanization, a deeper awareness of who we are and how we differ in our understandings. Don Quixote sees a lot of wicked giants, Sancho Panza sees windmills. A mild man otherwise, but pugnacious when an "adventure" presents itself, the knight charges. Horse and rider are swept up by a whirling van and tumbled to the ground, ignominiously, ridiculously. Sancho is proven right. But the Don is immovable in his chivalric madness: Frestón the enchanter turned the giants into mills so as to rob him of the glory of defeating them. To the ridiculousness of his delusion and its consequences is added the ridiculousness of his persistence in it, which endures for some 900 inventive pages.

The Spanish masterpiece is the mother of the novel too in its scope. Cervantes's purpose as he states it more than once was to mock "the false and nonsensical" books of chivalry that drew on the Carolingian and Arthurian legends. The simple read these books as history, and Don Quixote in the simplicity of his madness does the same. After a peasant carries home the battered hidalgo ignobly on a mule from his first, brief sally, the village priest and barber conduct an Inquisitional auto-da-fé of the corrupting romances in Quixote's library, sparing however the sensible ones in which "knights eat, and sleep, and die in their beds and make a will before they die." That is how Don Quixote dies at last, sensibly, having lived one absurd adventure after another.

Yet the preposterous romances had one good thing about them—they provided "a broad and spacious field" in which an author's pen is able to write unhindered about every kind of happening, person, and subject: shipwrecks and battles, valiant captains and brave knights, insolent barbarians and beautiful ladies, necromancy, music, statecraft, and much more. This is the Canon Priest speaking who, coming on the Don being brought home in a cage at the end of his second sally, is told about Quixote's book-induced delusion of his

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being born to revive knight errancy. The Canon deplores the false romances that have turned poor Alonso Quixano's head, except for the one virtue he allows them above. The worthy kind of stories "restrain exaggeration and moderate impossibility"; they adhere to "verisimilitude and mimesis," and though written in prose possess all those "possibilities of sweetness and pleasingness" which poetry and rhetoric afford. Their "free style" enables the writer to show his skill in a variety of literary modes including the epic—"for the epic can be written in prose as well as in verse." We can hear Cervantes's voice behind the Canon's words, preaching as he practices in *Don Quixote*, but also as he doesn't practice.

He practices as he preaches by writing an epic in prose. This was to establish the novel's (negative) foundation principle. For the prose epic's "free style" grants the writer freedom from the rules of Classical-Renaissance poetics. Such freedom opened up to Cervantes the whole dusty Manchegan world of villages and roads, inns and palacios, with its vivid Spanish life at all levels—opened up in time to novelists the whole world everywhere. Literary discussion of this kind is always breaking out in *Don Quixote*, which among other things is a book about books.

But Cervantes doesn't practice as he has the Canon preach. Far from eliminating fantasticality and impossible wonders from *Don Quixote*, he brings them in full blown under cover of the Don's dementia. Extravagant romantic matter is part and parcel of the realism of *Don Quixote*. And the novel as it has developed has always involved (as often remarked) a tense relation between imagination and reality. Ortega y Gasset put it this way:

> [A]lthough the realistic novel was born in opposition to the so-called novel of fantasy, it carries adventure [i.e. the imaginative reality that reaches beyond "inert" reality into the vibrant unreal] enclosed within its body.

Borges for his part said: "The *Quixote* is less an antidote for [the chivalric] fictions than it is a secret, nostalgic farewell."

Often honored as the first (and best) novel, *Don Quixote* started the genre on its realistic course. But what *kind* of realist novel is it, exactly? Exactness in the identification of literary objects is often difficult. Yet surely *Don Quixote* is a comedy first of all, on the surface, and more particularly a parody. That's what Cervantes himself says, more than once. The Don in his attempts to emulate the legendary champions Amadís of Gaul, Roland, and others, regularly ends up unhorsed, bruised, and battered. Someone nicely said, summing up the reading of the book for the first three hundred years, that "in the seventeenth century it was received with a laugh, in the eighteenth with a smile, in the nineteenth with a tear." Early in the nineteenth century, *Don Quixote* began to be read as a complex classical work calling for a due complexity of interpretation. Let me distinguish two "schools" in the understanding of it which have long been recognized in one way or another. Though critics today generally belong to both, the distinction is a useful simplification.

On the one hand there are the Comedists. *Don Quixote* was an immediate hit when its first part was published in 1605, because of its mockery of the widely read romances. Before the nineteenth century, every reader was a Comedist *avant la lettre*. No one dreamed it was anything but a burlesque of the knight errantry books, so there was nothing to interpret. When the Don thinks an inn is a castle, that's a ridiculous figment of his madness, nothing more. Erich Auerbach, the most formidable of the Comedists, writing brilliantly as always in *Mimesis*, says flatly that "the whole book is a comedy in which well founded reality holds madness up to ridicule. . . . We always remain in the realm of gaiety." This is the story that was read in the novel's own time, then later by Fielding and Sterne, and translated accordingly.

On the other hand are the Profundists. For them the novel's humor is sad, its com-

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edy tragic. His squire Sancho dubs his master the Knight of the Sorrowful Face because "your Grace has the sorriest looking face" he, Sancho, has seen in a long time, "it must be because of battle fatigue or the teeth your Grace lost when you charged that 'army' (of sheep) and the shepherds stoned you." Sancho sees what is plainly to be seen. Don Quixote likes the title Sancho bestows on him, ostensibly because knights errant in the romances all bear resounding titles, but unostensibly for Profundists looking below the surface because his sadness originates in a depth of meaning. For them the knight's melancholy has a hidden philosophical, religious, learned sense. He is a transcendental, tragic, universal figure. If indeed he is mad and foolish, he is wiser in his folly than the sane.

The first Profundists were the Romantics. For the psychologizing Coleridge, *Don Quixote* is the symbolical product of Cervantes's unconscious mind. The Don is a Hamlet-type in whom there is an excess of inwardness and imagination not balanced by a practical judgment learned amid the busy affairs of men. (Coleridge as usual is talking about himself.) There is something to be said for this early invoking of the unconscious. S. T. C. was humorless but good at profundities.

To Lord Byron, dropping a tear in *Don Juan*, the Manchegan hero is a figure of pathos. "Of all tales 'tis the saddest—and more sad/ Because it makes us smile;/ his hero's right/ . . . to curb the bad/ His only object . . . / . . . 'tis his virtue makes him mad!" There is something to be said for this too. The long, gaunt, gray figure of the hidalgo in the rusty armor of his great-grandfathers, on his rusty steed Rocinante, breathes sadness along with mad knightly ardor—but not because he has been driven mad by his virtue. His kindness, generosity, knowledge, and good sense are displayed when he is right side up, only then. His sagacity exists entirely apart from his madness. We don't, as Auerbach writes, "hear wisdom speaking through madness in his case as we do with Shakespeare's fools or with Charlie Chaplin." Byron is reading something into the text. Yet "such transforming and transcendent interpretations are often fertile." *Don Quixote* "shows a new face to every age." Still, Cervantes's book is all "merry play."

Thus the Comedist. Whom to choose, among so many, for the Profundist? I choose that remarkable Spaniard Miguel de Unamuno, that *maestro di color qui sanno*, whose overbearing, refractory voice makes you feel small and dithering, whose insubservience is such an inspiration, who said, "My aim is to make all men live a life of restless longing." As if in reply to Auerbach, though writing before him, Unamuno said (in *The Tragic Sense of Life*):

> What do I care what Cervantes did or did not mean to put into that book, or what he actually did put into it? The living part of it for me is whatever I discover in it—whether Cervantes put it there or not—and it is whatever I myself put into or under or over it, and whatever we all of us put into it.

—which is perfect Quixotism.

Unamuno was going to write an essay proving it is Don Quixote who is real and Cervantes invented. All translations of the novel were good, in fact they were better than the original Spanish, because the universal spiritual idea of the knight was the important thing, not Cervantes's fine writing, which he didn't think so fine. Anyhow Cervantes was dead and the Manchegan caballero andante alive, alive for ever. Don Quixote is a tragic hero because he is ridiculous. Heroism is being ridiculous and not being afraid of being ridiculous. Jesus is the divine ridiculous hero and the Don the human ridiculous hero. To be ridiculous is to defy the overbearing is-ness of the world, always to seek, like a fool, what one wishes the world to be, the unreal ideal. "[O]ver all civilization hovers the shadow of Ecclesiastes, with the admonition, 'How dieth the wise man?—as a fool'" (2:16).

The Romantic Profundists pushed things

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too far. More and more they read the novel as "esoteric literature." The phrase is Martin de Riquer's, the Cervantes scholar, who said, a little like Auerbach, that we need "to read *Don Quioxte* ingenuously" (to which I would add "again"): to see it according to Cervantes's declared intention of heaping ridicule on the foolish books of chivalry. After you recognize that, you can elaborate interpretations to your heart's content. In recent times critics have done exactly that. *Don Quixote*'s resuming its comic character has been no barrier to the multiplying of interpretations. Into the novel's depths today peer philosophers, literary theorists, historians of Spanish culture, Western culture, Freudians, anti-Freudians, post-Freudians, socio-political English professors, sex-and-gender scholars. Some of this work sheds light: for example, that *Don Quixote* is a powerful criticism of the imperialist utopianism of sixteenth-century Spain. Another strains to find an assertion of an antifeudal, proto-bourgeois social and sexual "mentality." Some are sucked out of the thumb, as the German phrase has it. What I haven't come across often in my limited reading are animated expressions of the pleasure afforded by a work whose purpose, among however many others it may have, is to give pleasure.

The English translations of *Don Quixote* reflect the Comedist-Profundist division. Those made in the early eighteenth century (I ignore the seventeenth), among which I know Motteux best, commanded the lively, vigorous English of that time. Motteux dealt freely, too freely, with the Spanish, leaving out a lot, putting in a lot, and making lots of mistakes. But his translation is very funny. In the course of a century and a half of retranslation, mistakes were corrected, footnotes added, the slapstick was toned down and the liveliness of the early translations was improved right out of the novel. *Don Quixote* became dreary. But now in the last decade, remarkably, two fine translations have been published, Burton Raffel's (1995) and Edith Grossman's (2003).

Like today's Cervantists, the two translators mix as it were both Comedist and Profundist understandings in their versions. Raffel's more colloquial translation falls on the side of the former and Grossman's more formal one of the latter. In her Translator's Note, Grossman praises Cervantes's writing for "flowing like honey." Her English too is suave and flowing and has an admirable dignity. When the knight declaims in high style, her style rises to emulate it. (But her use of the second person singular when the Don holds forth madly in antiquated romance language jars more than it heightens the contrast effect.) Not infrequently Grossman declines into pedantic diction and overformality. Sancho's peering into the Don's mouth after his stoning by the shepherds and exclaiming over the many teeth he's lost cause the knight to cry, "Woe is me! . . . Dentation is to be valued much more than diamonds." Why does she write "discalced" friars rather than "barefoot" friars? Or call food "comestibles"? But these things said, it remains true that Grossman's *Don Quixote* is written in an apt, clear, fine English.

Raffel's English is less polished, at times even awkward, and less apt in many of its renderings. But his colloquial style survives phrases like "smart ass" which exceeds even his liberal stylistic context. His Quixote-Sancho conversations have the called-for vivacity; it's a pleasure to read a lively *Quixote* again. I must confess, however, to still liking old Motteux best, with all his liberties and mistakes and indignities. Here is an example why. Sancho is telling the Don he'd like to be paid for his squiring work.

> "When I serv'd my Master Carrasco, quoth Sancho, Father to the Batchelor, your Worship's Acquaintance, I had two Ducats a Month, besides my Victuals: I don't know what You'll give me; tho' I'm sure there's more Trouble in being Squire to a Knight-Errant, than in being Servant to a Farmer; for truly we that go to Plough and Cart in a Farmer's Service, though we moil and sweat

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> so-a-days as not to have a dry Thread on our Backs, let the worst come to worst, are sure of a Bellyful at Night out of the Pot, and to snore in Bed."

Why is *Don Quixote* funny? One reason is, because it is the story of Alonso Quixano's obsession. Obsessions are funny (not always!). Mr. Dick, also lunatic, can't keep King Charles's head out of the memorial he can't finish for that reason. Dickens is a master of the comedy of obsession. Even hideous obsessions have about them an aspect of the ridiculous, as witness the sometimes farcical treatment of Nazism in movies and on the stage. An obsession is an automatism; it operates mechanically. The humor lies in the loss of self-mastery or freedom. We understand that human beings are free; their being deprived of their freedom by the constraint of an obsession turns them into objects—which is funny. Don Quixote sees a troop of men carrying along with them a muffled female figure and *must* gallop (or rather canter, which is the most Rocinante is up to) to the attack to free a noble lady being held captive by villains. He is knocked on his backside and beaten by indignant penitents marching in procession bearing a robed image of the Virgin Mary.

Cervantes as a narrator likes to equivocate, making complex play with the relation between literature and life. He equivocates about the authorship of *Don Quixote*, pretending somebody else wrote it. It isn't an uncommon tactic with storytellers, but with Cervantes it has a purpose contrary to the usual one. The author of *Don Quixote of La Mancha* is given as an Arab historian, Cide Hamete Benengeli. On the one hand, Arabs by nature lie. Therefore you have to conclude that his history can't be trusted. On the other hand, an Arab historian would not be inclined to exaggerate the deeds of a Christian knight. So things even out. This information is divulged only after you have read eight chapters, because the manuscript breaks off at that point, in the middle of an adventure. Luckily a "second author" finds a notebook containing the story's continuation in a Toledo market. Written in Cide Hamete's Arabic, it requires this second author to hire a Morisco to translate it. Thus the manuscript passes from the Arabic of Cide Hamete, into the translator's Castilian, into the hands of a third party called a second author without explanation; nor is it said who wrote the first eight chapters, except we know that the title page reads "by Miguel de Cervantes." It adds up to three hands in the narrative pot. A pretended original author is usually meant to enhance the truth effect of a fiction. But Cervantes' three authorial hands, a bizarre collaboration, call attention to *Don Quixote*'s fictionality (as do other of Cervantes' narrative devices). Does such artifice undermine the reader's voluntary suspension of disbelief? No. All fiction is artifice, we always know that. But in certain kinds of fiction it's very much a part of our pleasure to forget it. Most realists take pains not to violate the pretense, whereas Cervantes shoves it in our face, impishly. It adds to the comedy, and since comedy is the largest part of the realism of *Don Quixote*, paradoxically adds to the realism.

Cervantes equivocates about another central matter too: the Don's madness. Among the ancient armor the hidalgo fetches from a forgotten corner is a helmet lacking a part, which a week's work repairs and which a testing blow of his sword immediately destroys. He repairs the helmet a second time, but prudently refrains from testing it a second time—he is not so mad as to submit his imagination to another trial. How mad is he, then? It's hard to say. Now armed and ready to sally out, one thing remains, to possess himself of the lady love every knight errant must have for worshipping chastely in his thoughts. He remembers a peasant girl in the next village he once had, from afar, a weakness for, Alonza Toboso (strong enough to knock a horse down, we find out later) and simply by declaring her his incomparable Lady Dulcinea of Toboso makes her so.

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Wishing to be a knight errant, Don Quixote wishes himself into being one, but it needs madness to wish oneself so far. It is a beautiful as well as a ridiculous madness. Its purposes are those of a golden-age knight errancy: to defend maidens, protect widows, and come to the aid of orphans and all those in need—which reality always defeats, comically but (we so readily feel) cruelly.

Why isn't Alonso Quixano content with his quiet lot as a country gentlemen, looking after his estate and doing what he loves best, hunting? With no more evidence than a few lines at the beginning and one or two later, critics have psychologized, sociologized, and ontologized the question. Why does King Lear, no senile monarch, divide up his kingdom foolishly? So we may have the play *King Lear*. Alonso Quixana goes mad so we may have the novel *Don Quixote*. When the sad-faced knight resolves in the Sierra Morena to imitate the crazy actions of the love-lorn Amadís in order for Sancho to be able to report his love distraction to Dulcinea, the squire asks his master why he should do such things? For no reason, the Don replies; the great thing is "to lose one's reason for no reason."

In Part One, Don Quixote is a poet who transfigures the persons and things of an inert reality—himself first of all, then mills, whores, sheep, inns, convicts, a barber's basin, a kitchen maid, a young woman in distress, a wine skin, etc., etc.—into the creatures and objects of a vivid world of marvels. Many of the Don's adventures are straight farce: as when Maritornes, the greasy Joan of a shabby inn, fumbling to find her muleteer lover among those sleeping in the inn loft, stumbles into the knight's arms. For him she is a "beautiful and exalted lady" whose burlap shift is silk, horse-mane tresses golden strands, sour smell a fragrance, and whose advances the knight, pledged to Dulcinea, must reject with gallant apologeticalness. A great Marx Brothers hullaballoo then ensues in the loft. The farce is full of fine invention, yet it's not an unfamiliar kind of comedy. That is not true of the Don's tilting at the windmills. It is a mystery to me why that simple scene has remained inexpressibly comic over the course of four hundred years, the book's most famous episode, known to those who never read the novel, the basis of a proverbial phrase. Perhaps Doré's inspired illustration influences my own delight. I know it does. But that's not the answer. I think the answer, which is no answer, is that Cervantes reached down into some ineffable depth of comedy to portray with mock-epic yet also epic grandeur horse and rider caught up by the turning sail and flung through the air with spraddled limbs to the ground far below.

Part Two, published ten years later (1615), picks up where Part One had left off, but the plot is given a turn away from its past direction. In one of the novel's great scenes, Sancho pretends (so as not to be caught out in an earlier lie) that three coarse peasant girls on donkeys are the beauteous Dulcinea whom the Don has sent him to find, and her shining damsels, all riding on snow white palfreys. But they're peasant girls, the bewildered knight says. Where are your eyes, exclaims Sancho, look again, for God's sake! Both Sancho and the Don kneel to address, in turn, the farm girls, Sancho in the chivalric language he has learned from his master, Don Quixote in still loftier epico-rhetorical eloquence. For answer they are told to get the hell out of the way. More shocks for the Don follow in the scene. He is dreadfully shaken by this encounter with crude reality, for a moment, but he keeps his madness intact by immediately blaming the unlovely apparition on enchantment. This is a turn-around: now it's the Don who sees what vulgarly is, and his servant what gloriously isn't.

We learn in Part Two that Part One has been published with magical speed and omniscience, and with huge success. All Spain now knows about Quixote and Sancho; they have become celebrities. The brazen introduction into Part Two, as a part of its story, of an actual fact produces a

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teasing confusion of fiction and life, of magic and mimesis—a complex comedy indeed, since literature (all art) is magic, and mimesis (realism) is only one of magic's forms.

Sancho exploited Don Quixote's madness to save himself from exposure. But the unfeeling Duke and Duchess, whom we soon encounter, exploit it cruelly. A good part of Part Two is taken up with the sadistic practical jokes the noble couple play on the knight and squire. These make uncomfortable reading. I suppose we are meant to laugh, but the brutal sixteenth-century joking is so extreme. The Don's defeats and humiliations accumulate and the atmosphere of the novel darkens. Defeated in a joust and compelled to forswear knight errantry, Quixote returns home. The ordeal of his battle with the world-as-it-is has exhausted him. Put to bed dying, he acknowledges the folly of his madness (or expressed another way: his vain heroic efforts to animate the inert reality) and again is Alonso Quixano known as the Good.

The world-as-it-is contains, as well as the Duke and the Duchess, as well as uninspired grayness, flatness, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, "personalities more alive than ourselves," as Harold Bloom writes in his introduction to the Grossman translation. Such deep, round, flesh-and-blood characterization can be compared to Shakespeare's. Not until the nineteenth century did French and Italian, and, at the turn of the century, German prose narration achieve anything like it. Such depth of characterization is not achieved in the modern way—or modern novelistic way—by an exploration of the inner life, but by speech and action, especially by speech. *Don Quixote* is partly a dialogue novel. The continual conversations the knight and squire carry on with one another is the novel's sublimest comedy.

Early in the novel the Don, enjoying the hospitality of goatherds, invites Sancho to share his plate and cup—for knight errancy, "like love, makes all things equal." Sancho declines, preferring to eat alone and in his peasant fashion. The knight, however, insists. Though it is master and servant speaking and the social distinction isn't abrogated in the least, the master speaks with no condescension and the servant with no hostility. This geniality—humanity—is the great, the famous quality of the Spanish masterpiece. The two talk and talk as they trot along on horse and donkey. Their conversation has the easy, intimate animation of a good marriage. The love, the friendship, that grows between them is one of equals. Of course it isn't perfect. That is only possible in nature, between the Don's Rocinante and Sancho's donkey, who stand for hours together with the horse's head hanging over the ass's neck. The squire's endless proverbs irritate the knight, the knight's corrections of his malapropisms the squire. The Don leaves Sancho in the lurch at one point; Sancho is rude and rudely ironical with the Don at times.

They love one another and also expect some advantage from another, Sancho a governorship or count's title, the knight the squire's giving himself three thousand whiplashes (according to magical commandment) so as to liberate Dulcinea from her enchantment. But whatever their expectations, they love one another. Sancho says about the Don that "he's innocent as a baby," incapable of doing harm, only capable of good, "and because he's simple I love him with all my heart." The Don for his part calls Sancho "the friend of my soul rather than my squire."

Sancho, kneeling beside the Don's deathbed, weeping, pleads, "Don't die, your Grace, take my advice, do, and live many more years, because the greatest madness a man can fall into in this life is to let himself die just like that, for no reason." But the Don makes his will, generously rewarding Sancho, and dies.

> The house was in an uproar. but even so the niece ate, the housekeeper drank, and Sancho Panza was content, for inheriting something wipes away or tempers in the heir the memory of the grief that is reasonably felt for the deceased.

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New poems
by Lisa Barnett, Sarah Ruden & Sarah Skwire

Entasis

The slightest outward curve is entasis,
employed in ancient buildings by the Greeks
for reasons lost to us. The emphasis

was optical, explained Vitruvius,
but this does not account for the technique:
why *are* these steps and walls, these lines oblique?

Why do they advance, retreating, to embrace
the thing that stops them coming face to face?
And we the same, old bafflements in place,

as, no longer wed, but not yet free,
we view the edifice that once was *we*,
and entasis spins out to entropy.

—*Lisa Barnett*

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The North Wind's daughter

They should pity her, banished from her shelter.
She has never seen a thing destroyed.
Risen now, scrambling in the fierce air dealt her,
She faints into those years of noise outside.

Where did it come from? she asks, fighting her eyes
Open to the plunging gale of trash.
No single object can she recognize.
No wonder that, so deep within the crash

Of stone and glass, she does not think to query
Herself, and how she might be classified:
A project that could possibly miscarry?
A deathless creature in a life that died?

—Sarah Ruden

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On my refusal to attend a poet's protest against the war

Because I work with words, and you do too,
you ask me to come stand with you today,
thinking the words that bind us—and they do—
have brought us close enough for you to say

with confidence that you know how I feel
at such a time as this, at such a time
when I can hardly find a word that's real
enough, can hardly find a sensate rhyme

to start to say I don't know what to think,
may never know, but know enough to know
I cannot stand with those who march, spill ink,
and protest, or with those who scream to go

and kill and kill. My occupation's gone
if I cannot be poet without being sure
always of what to say, what should be done.
It's different for some. Their answer's pure

and simple, and I understand. I'm glad,
though mystified. They are so sure what's right.
They have the faith that I have never had.
In place of it I've doubts that make me write

and question, write, and doubt, and ask again
about all this. Friends, how can I explain?
I cannot stand with you. This much is clear:
I hold you dear. I hold my doubts more dear.

—*Sarah Skwire*

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Reconsiderations

The self-made Scot

by John Keegan

John Buchan opens the door to the world one's being seeks—a world of thickets refreshed by rain showers, of streams tinkling over boulders smoothed by uncountable winter floods, of the sharp cry of an unseen bird in a bush, of peat smoke rising lazily from a cottage chimney in the calm evening air, a world of nature utterly at peace and yet—here is the key Buchan ingredient—tinged with the menace of man the enemy.

Buchan knew the landscapes he describes so evocatively—they are usually Scottish, not English—because he took his greatest pleasure, all his life, in walking the country ways and scrambling in high places. He fished; he watched birds; he learnt the names of the wild plants, and, as he grew older, he read the history and legends of lowland and highland, feeding his vivid imagination on stories of border raids, clan feuds, and Jacobite adventure. The longer the walk, the harder the climb, the more he enjoyed the holiday. He took little with him, fed on oatcakes, sometimes slept in the open under a plaid, swam at daybreak in the waters of a loch, found shelter at night with a friendly crofter. Companions of the road, drovers, shepherds, hill farmers on the way to market, fed his store of dialect tales and folk wisdom. Distance and remoteness entered his being.

Yet Buchan was not really a countryman. His hills, dales, gentle riversides, and tinkling burns were brilliantly created products of his imagination rather than images of daily experience. His childhood was spent in a small town (where his Free Church of Scotland father began his ministry), and his youth in the narrow streets of Glasgow. Even in his early years, the countryside was a place of escape, not a defining environment. It was for that reason that it worked so powerfully on his consciousness. Real countrymen are less romantic about their surroundings. Buchan the author conveys the magic of nature as successfully as he does because nature was for him an experience of time spent away from home, not of home itself.

John Buchan, born on August 26, 1875, was the son of William Buchan, clergyman, and Helen Masterson, a sheep-farmer's daughter, only just eighteen at the time of the birth of her first child. The family was modestly middle-class, a status Buchan would never deny, even when fame and fortune carried him into the ranks of the rich and great. He began his education at the local Board School. When his father was appointed to a large Free Church parish in the Gorbals, he transferred to Hutcheson's, a Glasgow grammar school. Later, with sons at Eton, he would say, "I never went to school in the conventional sense"—but the truth was that schools like Hutcheson's were the normal destination of boys of the Scottish middle class. Hutcheson's, moreover, did him well. He won a scholarship that paid his fees of four guineas a year and in

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1892, aged sixteen, a bursary to Glasgow University.

Scottish universities, in Buchan's youth, were to Oxford and Cambridge as Hutcheson's was to an English public school—hardscrabble places of study, not seminaries for young gentlemen. Glasgow University in the 1890s, however, had several professors who came from Oxford or Cambridge or were going on to chairs there. As Buchan's university years extended, and he took the measure of his talents, the idea grew of trying for Oxford himself. The expense, which might have been an insuperable obstacle, he was equipped to meet because he had already begun to write for money. With remarkable self-confidence, he tried stories and essays on Scottish and English magazines and won acceptances; he went to see editors and so impressed them that he was taken on to read the manuscripts of other would-be writers. When, in 1895, he went up to Oxford, he was earning £70 a year by writing and the further expenses of his first year were just covered by a scholarship he won. Four years later his annual income was over £400, £130 from his scholarship, the rest from publishers. He was much better off than most middle-class undergraduates and no charge on his father.

Oxford did more than start Buchan on his literary career. It also launched him into English life. Buchan never ceased to be a Scot, then or later, but he did not insist on his Scottishness as many fellow countrymen abroad did. Within a year of leaving Glasgow, his Scottish accent had almost disappeared and, by the time he left Oxford, his close friends were almost all English—many, such as Raymond Asquith, from leading English families. He moved, moreover, in English society without any unease or self-consciousness. His transition from teenage Glasgow graduate to young man-about-town in London was achieved with apparently effortless smoothness.

Propulsion rather than escalation was the secret. Buchan stood out, even as an undergraduate, but did not obtrude or impose. He was liked by his contemporaries and admired. They foresaw for him a great future, in politics, the law, or public life. Not without reason. He had appeared in *Who's Who* at the age of twenty-three, been published in *The Yellow Book*, been elected President of the Union, and, in his last term, achieved a First in Greats. His friends not only expected him to succeed but also wished and helped him to do so.

His early career bore out his early promise. Deciding to go to the bar, he quickly found chambers and was called as a barrister, after one failed attempt at the examination, in 1901. It was not his first exam failure; he had also—twice—failed the examination for an All Souls Fellowship. He did not harbor long regrets, recognizing that he was not a natural academic and that life in the great world would suit him better than that of the quadrangle and library. At the bar he continued to write, beginning to turn out journalism for the national papers at a rapid pace and embarking on a full-length novel, through themes developed in his early stories of Scottish adventure and historical romance.

His start in journalism and the law was soon interrupted, however, by a call from afar. In 1901 the Boer War was drawing to a close, but the "bitter enders" among the Boers were refusing to give up. Formal operations were at an end but guerrilla warfare continued in the Transvaal, and sporadically in the Orange Free State, and even in the British Cape Province. Its effect on the life of the territories was disastrous. The Afrikaners who had surrendered were prisoners; those who had not were fugitives on the veld; farms everywhere were derelict; the Boer women and children were left without proper livelihood. The British solution was to confine them in what were unfortunately called Concentration Camps, where they could be fed but also prevented from supporting their menfolk. The intention was benevolent as well as strategic, but the result was deplorable. Epidemics broke out in the camps, causing death rates as high as 30 percent.

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There was public outrage and the demand for action. The British government, which had resumed control of the Free State and Transvaal as colonies, had already recognized the need for a program of reconstruction. Alfred Milner, a leading public servant, High Commissioner for South Africa since 1897, was charged with that duty. His response was to recruit personal secretaries who could carry out the mission. This "Kindergarten" was to contain some of the most promising young men of their generation, including a future editor of *The Times*, Geoffrey Dawson, and John Buchan.

Buchan was given two responsibilities: first, to make the camps healthy; second, to begin reviving agriculture. He did not solve the camp problem; that was done by bringing doctors and nurses experienced in quelling epidemics from Britain and India. His agricultural work was more constructive and, to him, more fulfilling. He liked the Boer farmers, who reminded him of the Border farmers of his childhood. He was at home with their Calvinism, so similar to his own Presbyterianism. Above all, he loved the South African landscape, the far horizons of the high veld, the green slopes of the Magaliesberg range, the tiny woods and valleys of the Drakensberg. He got to know it well, riding long distances across country, discovering places of secret beauty and forming the intention of returning one day to build a house in the wilderness.

He also got to know people he would not have met in his respectable life at the English bar: soldiers, adventurers, and men out to make their fortunes in the world. The gold and diamonds of South Africa had attracted fortune-hunters from all over the world who made Johannesburg a cosmopolitan and vibrant city. Many of the adventurers were reasonably law-abiding. Some were not. Buchan found the crooks as interesting as his own sort of high-minded empire builder and was to populate his future novels with characters drawn from his Johannesburg experience.

When he left South Africa at the beginning of 1903, his career as a writer, however, still lay ahead of him. He had published four slight novels and several collections of short stories, but he had decided against setting up as a full-time man of letters. Literature was to be "my hobby, not my profession"; so he summed up his intentions at that time. On returning to London, he resumed his journalism, his legal work, though in chambers, not in court, and sought election to Parliament, as a moderate Conservative. He was busy, well-known in London society, and financially comfortable. After the glitter of his Oxford years, however, and of his first appearance on the literary scene, his career had fallen into eclipse. His early promise had faded; he had ascended no higher up the slopes of achievement he seemed destined to conquer. The most notable event of these Edwardian years was his marriage in July 1907 to Susan Grosvenor. She was everything his doting mother least sought in a bride for her adored eldest son. She was English, Anglican, and, by Mrs. Buchan's homely standards, a sight too grand, the granddaughter of a peer and a cousin of the Duke of Westminster. She was nevertheless to prove a partner in a happy marriage, though to it she brought no money. John and Susan's growing family would have to be supported by his efforts alone.

The basis of his livelihood as a married man was supplied by his appointment as a partner in the old Edinburgh firm of Thomas Nelson, who had published Walter Scott, Buchan's literary hero. Tommy Nelson, the current head of the firm, was an Oxford contemporary; he and Buchan agreed on a salary of £1500 a year, a very generous income in that period. More income was welcome, however, for Buchan contributed to the expenses of his parents and sister, Anna, then setting out herself on the career of a novelist.

So Buchan persisted with his writing. The pattern was, much as before, collections of short stories, a novel (*Prester John*) which drew both on Scottish scenes and his African experience, and a biography of the

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Covenanter Chief, Montrose. None sold more than 2000 copies and he earned good reviews but little cash.

Then his luck turned. Buchan was prone to exhaustion, as highly-strung men who work too hard often are. Moreover, he "relaxed" by taking up a new writing task. In 1913 he had spent his time on a cruise to the Azores composing a "shocker," which would appear in 1916 as *The Power House*. In the later summer of 1914, as war engulfed Europe, he fell ill again and was taken by Susan to Broadstairs for a holiday. Also holidaying in Broadstairs was a cousin of Susan's who was renting a clifftop house with steps down to a private beach. As he recuperated, Buchan began his second "shocker." He was to call it *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. It was an immediate success when first published in 1916; by 1960, his biographer Janet Adam Smith calculated its sales had reached 355,000 copies. By now the figure is far higher.

It is wrong for an introduction to spoil a reader's enjoyment of the book that follows by revealing anything of its plot. Without doing so, it is possible to say that *The Thirty-Nine Steps* reworks in literary form much of Buchan's life thus far (he was thirty-nine in August 1914). The beginning of the action is set in Scotland, at first in Galloway, which he knew well from a long Oxford holiday, then in Tweeddale. He peoples the action with Scottish types met during childhood stays in Tweeddale or on his student tramps around the Lowlands. The prologue, however, is staged in London, the London of clubs and West End streets in which he settled after arriving in the capital, and the atmosphere of a rich, complacent imperial city is perfectly caught in his description of how a returned colonial, his hero Richard Hannay, swiftly tires of the allurements of metropolitan life.

After Hannay's adventure in Scotland, the action shifts to the Thames Valley, a countryside of sleepy villages and peaceful trout streams, explored during Buchan's years at Oxford, and then quite unspoiled by the extension of London's tentacles into its water meadows and chalk downland. The Thames valley remained as rural as it had been when Gray was writing the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" and the only outsiders were grandees rich enough to build weekend retreats. Buchan captures the type and the atmosphere to perfection in his depiction of Sir Walter Bullivant, the government insider and man of secrets.

The culmination of the plot carries Richard Hannay, after a second London episode, to the Channel coast. As he wrote the final chapter, Buchan was drawing directly on the scenes that lay about him during his recuperation in Broadstairs. His evocation of monied leisure at the early twentieth-century seaside could not be bettered. The description of beach donkeys and pierrots padding homeward in the warm twilight past the garden gates of comfortable villas, where maids wait to serve supper and the hall tables are covered with tennis rackets and folded waterproofs, perfectly conveys the sense of a privileged class enjoying its release from city labor among locals with real breadwinning to do. Buchan was by then one of the privileged, but he was not far enough away from the Gorbals to disguise his knowledge of the realities of the breadwinning world of his childhood.

Most realistic of all is his characterization of his hero, Richard Hannay. Hannay, perhaps inevitably, is a Scot, and a Scot who has made his way in the world. Buchan knew about self-made Scots, but Hannay is also a colonial, a type he knew only from the outside. One of the triumphs of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is Buchan's realization of an exile who has made a pile in a harsh world and returned to the Motherland to enjoy what he has won. The frustrated energy, the impatience with convention, but also the fundamental deference towards Imperial Britain's great and good ring absolutely true. So too does Hannay's personal integrity. He may look up to grandees, whom his adventure brings him to meet with surprising frequency. At his center, however, Hannay

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believes in himself, as a successful professional—his pile was made as a mining engineer—and in his own simple but unswerving code of right and wrong. Moral certainty, which Buchan possessed in abundance, was one of his strengths as a writer. It gave him the power to achieve something particularly elusive: moral atmosphere.

The Thirty-Nine Steps is, however its author described it, not merely a "shocker." It is a story of good and evil. Given Buchan's optimistic and forgiving nature, he could not make the evil very severe. His villains are not beyond redemption, and what they plot is less than diabolical. The good, by contrast, is very good indeed. That is what makes his world and his heroes so attractive. They are upright and chivalrous, as well as unthinkingly brave, and they enjoy the sublime assurance that, when things look their blackest, chance will cast them in the path of someone ready to help who is just like themselves. The Buchan firmament is peopled by characters who are instinctively patriotic, romantically unselfish, and ready at a moment's notice to abandon everyday duty to do service to the cause.

Buchan's "cause" was by no means as simple as King and Country, deeply loyal though he was to both. It also partook of Scottishness, the Scotland of burn and bracken but also of the One True Kirk, and anomalously of England as well, an idealized England of high-minded gentlemen and idyllic landscape. There were other elements, including a strong populism—Buchan's humbler folk exude sturdy virtue—a pervasive respect for institutions, and a whiff of Empire. Suffusing everything is something distinctively Buchanesque, a hint of presences just beyond the boundary of consciousness. Buchan's world and the values for which his characters are ready to risk their lives are utterly matter-of-fact, but at its fringe hover unseen, undefined powers whose intervention can never be discounted.

It is the dimension of the mysterious that makes Buchan's writing so unfailingly compelling. It is the other ingredients—strong characters (often, if minor participants, drawn with brilliant comedy), exact and evocative scene-setting, highly authentic dialogue (particularly when rendered in dialect), sudden surprises and, above all, rapid change of location—that make him so readable. Buchan is a master of pace. Raymond Chandler, one of his admirers, laid down the principle that the mystery writer, if in doubt as to how to proceed, should have a man come through a door with a gun in his hand. Buchan never seems in any doubt as to how to proceed, but he sustains interest by the relentless speed with which he shifts scenes. Hannay's rush from London to Galloway to the Tweeddale to the Thames Valley to London again and finally to the Channel coast, by express train, high-powered motor car, and on his own fleet feet, leaves the reader breathless, but also panting to know what lies beyond the next twist in the plot.

It does not disappoint. Better than that, the narrative is deeply satisfying. Buchan had a happy and wonderful life, culminating in his appointment, as Lord Tweedsmuir, to be Governor General of Canada. His personal saga was already launched when he began *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Its consistently optimistic mood and its simple theme of the triumph of a good man over his country's enemies reflect the story of his own life thus far and anticipate its development. If Hannay's succession of chance encounters with humble helplessness and powerful supporters, wholly unlikely though it may be, rings true, it is because he was drawing on his own lucky experiences.

John Buchan was blessed by fortune, which brought a Scottish boy of obscure family to fame, wealth, and lifelong friendship with the greatest in the land. He deserved every particle of his success, for he was a writer touched by genius. The outline of his enormous talent is discernible in each page of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

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Theater

Gitmo chic

by Mark Steyn

A smash in London, *Guantanamo: "Honor Bound to Defend Freedom"* arrived at 45 Bleecker Theater just in time for the Republican Convention. It's about those detained in the "'so-called' war on terror" (as Canada's CBC likes to call it), and its program is dense with helpful background information: Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, we're told, "exists as a result of what one might call the first phase of outward U.S. imperialism, as opposed to inward imperialism, the so-called manifest destiny under which the United States conquered much of North America."

Let's hold it there for a moment. The Guantanamo detentions have certainly disquieted large numbers of people, not all of them on the left. In Britain, the first pictures of the prisoners arriving in Cuba marked the point at which many nominally conservative commentators began abandoning the war on terror, even though most of their concerns—malaria, mosquitoes—were bogus and stemmed more from their aversion to basic research than anything Rumsfeld had done. But the orange jumpsuits for the detainees proved a durable hit, to the point where they're now an instantly recognizable shorthand for any director in need of "relevance." Simon McBurney's recent production of *Measure for Measure*, at the Royal National Theatre, dressed the Viennese prisoners in orange Guantanamo chic, and needless to say everyone got the joke.

But, if what's going on at Guantanamo is supposed to be a moral outrage obvious to all, why expand the brief? If you're seriously interested in converting the open-minded to the injustices of Camp Delta, does it help or hinder your case to oblige them also to sign on to your theories about the broader illegitimacy not just of the base ("the first phase of outward US imperialism") but of America itself ("the so-called manifest destiny")? "Less is more" is a good rule for effective agitprop, but these days the Left is reluctant to let you order *à la carte*; you've got to open wide and swallow the whole all-U-can-eat salad bar. Ostensibly, the New York theater claimed to be eager to attract visiting GOP Conventioneers—the producers of *"I'm Gonna Kill the President!": A Federal Offense* even offered free tickets to "Republican delegates with ID"—but in reality they and their audience seem content to bask in the glow of their own assumptions reflected back at them.

At 45 Bleecker, *Guantanamo* looks a lot more one-sided than it did when it started out in North London. At the Tricycle in Kilburn, it was presented in the tradition of the theater's ongoing series of "tribunal plays"—that's to say, plays drawn from the official inquiries into various scandals of modern Britain and beyond: the Stephen Lawrence hearings (police racism), the arms-to-Iraq inquiry (sanctions busting), the Srebrenica war crimes tribunal (U.N. complicity in

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atrocities), Lord Hutton's inquiry into the death of Dr. David Kelly (Tony Blair's "deception" on the case for war with Iraq). In all of these cases, it's not hard to predict where the play's sympathies lie, but the fact that the script is confined to transcripts of the hearings gives it an air of neutrality—like watching C-SPAN but with, well, you know, just a cut or two here and there.

Guantanamo was passed off as merely the latest of the Tricycle's forensic docudramas. But, of course, there have been no official hearings into Guantanamo, so there are no official transcripts. So Victoria Brittain, a former *Guardian* foreign editor, and Gillian Slovo, a novelist and daughter of two of South Africa's pioneering anti-apartheid activists, were forced to, so to speak, call their own witnesses and compile their own transcripts—from interviews, detainees' letters, lawyers' briefs, public statements by government officials. The final selection includes the words of several British subjects captured while fighting for the Taliban and only recently released from Guantanamo, plus British "law lord" Lord Steyn (no relation), a U.S. military lawyer, an Englishman whose sister was killed on 9/11, a Muslim father from the English Midlands whose son is still in Guantanamo, and politicians such as Don Rumsfeld, the U.S. Defense Secretary, and Jack Straw, the British Foreign Secretary. Instead of a courtroom setting, they staged the play on a set filled with somewhat undersized replicas of the notorious Guantanamo "cages," between which Rummy and the star turns prowl.

My own position on Guantanamo two-and-a-half years on is roughly this: I have some measure of sympathy for some hapless Pushtun goatherd scooped up in the disintegration of the Taliban regime, less for the many young Saudis captured in Afghanistan, and less still for the western jihadi—those with British, Australian, Canadian, and European passports. If I were the government of the United States, that last group would be the ones I'd be most interested in wringing every last drop of info out of—the Pushtun goatherd is no big threat to us, but the western jihadi are the ones who know how to swim in our waters, what ID you need at the border post, the form of words that gets you onto the plane. I don't believe these fellows are covered by the Geneva Convention. On the other hand, they're entitled to broadly fair and just treatment. I'm not such a fan of Rummy that I'm not open to persuasion on some points. But the play doesn't really work hard to persuade. In London, the theater's track record with its tribunal plays lent the work a veneer of authority. But, in New York, where most of the audience is unfamiliar with the Tricycle's repertoire, Nicolas Kent and Sacha Wares's production seems noticeably underpowered.

Part of the problem is that it starts with an assumption—that the British detainees at Guantanamo are entirely innocent. If you'd been following the London papers since January 2002, you might very well take that as read. But there's been less about it in the American prints—and, indeed, the U.K. contingent at Guantanamo is, for a New York audience, somewhat of an esoteric prism through which to understand the issues raised. Had this been a transcript of an actual hearing, like the Srebrenica trials, the authors would have been more constrained: you'd have had side A and side B and, even if you're pro-A and you edit B to make him come off worse, you're still obliged to address the alternative point of view. Here, Miss Brittain and Miss Slovo all but eliminate it. The tribunal play works because a good courtroom trial is, by its nature, dramatic. Lifting great chunks of words from letters, interviews, and press conferences and assembling them into a mosaic isn't, in the same sense, inherently dramatic—it's more like a revue. And ignoring any words that might support another view of the story is like a revue in which every song is in the same tempo.

For example, the most touching performance in the play is by Harsh Nayyar, as the dignified father of a Birmingham man still held at Guantanamo. Even through the heavily censored letters from the camp, he

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can see his son declining from fierce resilience to deep despair. "I am not asking for mercy from anybody," says the father. "I am asking for justice."

Now I know it's easy to argue that this prisoner from the English Midlands is not typical. Guantanamo is the only "torture camp" in history where the medical staff outnumber the prisoners. If you're a Brit detainee and you get some disease, you'll be diagnosed and treated a lot quicker in Gitmo than at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. Many Russian Muslims claimed their health improved during their time in the camp—they ate better and they put on weight. Several Afghan and Pakistani Muslims got back home and told the local press they'd had such a grand time they wanted to emigrate to the United States.

But, granted all that, it's possible to believe that the Birmingham detainee is typical of a certain segment of the camp's population, and that his father is typical of anxious relatives everywhere. After all, even Saddam Hussein's daughters, enjoying their exile in Jordan, have been bitching and moaning about what a raw deal poor old Dad's getting. It's when one turns to the other characters selected by Brittain and Slovo that one gets a little impatient. Jeffrey Brick plays a man whose sister died in the World Trade Center and yet insists he wants the detainees freed so that he can buy them a drink (don't make the offer in Riyadh, is my advice). This gentleman exists and has been widely quoted in the British media, but he is profoundly unrepresentative of the bereaved of 9/11, and you can't help feeling that the authors have fastened on to him because he provides a glib moral equivalence between two sets of "innocent victims."

Very well, let that go. What representatives are there from the other side—from the very many people who think, given that this is a war against combatants without rank or serial number, Guantanamo is an acceptable ad hoc arrangement and rather humane, all things considered? After all, if Rummy had wanted to be "culturally sensitive" to the Taliban detainees, he'd simply have herded them on to some Afghan soccer pitch and shot them as the half-time entertainment, which is the way Mullah Omar's boys liked to do things.

Alas, the rest of the story doesn't get a look in here until the Second Act, when Robert Langdon Lloyd does a turn as Don Rumsfeld delivering lines from various Pentagon press conferences. But the point is he's presented as comic relief—as a cartoon Rumsfeld. The authors assume that everyone coming to the play shares their belief that the Defense Secretary is a figure of ridicule, albeit a sinister one. This may be true for 99% of the audience, though at 45 Bleecker the crowd seemed to warm up to him mainly as a welcome break from the plonking slabs of lifeless verbiage that went before. Nicolas Kent is a smart director and, in London, he was savvy enough to leave out the more lurid accounts of torture with which the detainees returned (one fellow gave an interview to *The Daily Mirror* alleging that the women guards waved tampons in his face, etc., piling on such extraordinary detail that it read like some epic sexual fantasy he'd been working on since he was fourteen). The result was that, by comparison with the tabloids, Kent's production was cool, forensic, dispassionate. In New York, in the absence of any tabloid hysteria, it just seems a windy bore that's shown up six months too late.

The theater is a swell place to go for "challenging" and "provocative" plays you already agree with. But there is one area where the leftish assumptions of the New York arts community and the demographics of their audience are not entirely in harmony: Israel. If you're at a party with theater folk in Britain or on the Continent, it goes without saying that everyone in the room's pro-Palestinian: they're the "victims" and, no matter how many buses and pizza parlors Yasser Arafat's incendiary schoolgirls blow up, it's Ariel Sharon who's the monster and the Israelis who are the obstacles to peace. On American college campuses, things are moving pretty fast in this direc-

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tion. But it's not something a New York audience is yet prepared to swallow. *The Diary of Anne Frank* and a whole slew of lesser mid-century drama still cast their shadows. If you can't be a Zionist on Broadway, where can you be?

That surely is one lesson to be drawn from *Golda's Balcony*, which has been playing at the Helen Hayes for almost a year now. That's a remarkable run for a solo show on a serious subject not exactly in tune with prevailing fashion, so I felt I ought to see it before it turned into *Cats* or *The Mousetrap*. The play is a new work by William Gibson, one of the old lions of the Anne Frank era: he made his name in the Fifties with *Two for the Seesaw* and *The Miracle Worker*. In his later career, he's found himself circling back to earlier hits: *The Miracle Worker* (1959) was about Helen Keller's young life, *Monday after the Miracle* (1982) was about her later life. *Golda* (1977) was a big-budget biodrama starring Anne Bancroft as the Israeli Prime Minister supported by a cast of dozens. Under the constraints of Broadway economics a quarter-century on, *Golda's Balcony* covers much of the same terrain but as a one-woman monologue for Tovah Feldshuh. Miss Feldshuh, as made up by John Caglione, Jr., with a prosthetic nose and thickened legs to suggest phlebitis, is a persuasive Golda Meir, especially in profile.

In Gibson's monologue, Golda has, in fact, two balconies—one at her apartment in Tel Aviv overlooking the Mediterranean, the other an observation deck above the Israeli nuclear-weapons facility at Dimona. It's October 1973 and a seventy-five-year-old woman is pondering whether to unleash a nuclear holocaust. The events of Gibson's play are, within the bounds of dramatic license, historically accurate: it was the Yom Kippur War and the Prime Minister faced a tough decision on how far Israel was prepared to go in order to survive. As Gibson tells it, the bombs were loaded and the planes were ready to fly, awaiting the order to take off and nuke Cairo and Damascus. At the last minute, the Nixon Administration provided sufficient assistance to enable Israel to defeat its enemies with conventional weapons.

Still, it's riveting material for a dramatist. "What happens when idealism becomes power?" Golda wonders. "To save a world you create, how many worlds are you entitled to destroy?" What amazes in such situations is that the Prime Minister or President has only a few hours to make the right call. He or she needs to be able to concentrate, to see through every angle of the question, knowing there's only one chance to answer it correctly.

And this is where Gibson's premise wanders slightly astray. Instead of focusing on this one extraordinary night, he uses it as a frame for Golda to reflect on her extraordinary life—her late husband, her affairs with the famous, her encounters with the likes of King Abdullah of Jordan. Golda Meir was born in Russia, raised in Milwaukee, and helped midwife a third nation, her own. It is a unique story. And yet, though I don't presume to know what was on the Prime Minister's mind that night, I doubt it was a this-is-your-life bio-package, and the effect of it is to drain the play's premise of its living, present-tense power. In her reminiscences, Miss Feldshuh's Golda is also unnervingly Catskillian at times—all shrugs and stage asides. Gibson interviewed Mrs. Meir extensively for his first play about her so he must have some idea of the woman behind the Prime Minister, but a lot of this shtick seems unduly reductive.

Nor is Miss Feldshuh helped by Scott Schwartz's heavy-handed production. There are lots of wraparound projections of maps and old photos and loud sound effects of gunfire and huge shadows of warplanes overhead. For a one-woman show it's very overpowering, and I'm surprised such a shrewd actress went along with it. I remember Miss Feldshuh a few years back bemoaning the numbing literalness of most theater productions. After they'd been to see some prop-heavy production, her mother had said, "Isn't the point of theater not to have a helicopter?" And Miss

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Feldshuh agreed, asserting confidently that it's her job as an actress to "create the helicopter and bring it to the audience." She might want to take that up with her present director.

But, despite Scott Schwartz's best efforts, Feldshuh's Golda comes through with piercing clarity at all the right moments. It's not just that some of the vignettes remind us of lessons we keep forgetting: King Abdullah was a vain and foolish man promoted way above his abilities by the British, but his utopian fantasy of a Jewish-Muslim federation under his benign Crown is one of the few genuine offers of "peace" any Arab leader has made to the Zionists; needless to say, he went the way of all Arab moderates, murdered by his brethren in the mosque in Jerusalem. But even more illuminating is the central dilemma faced by Golda. You realize that, as at Guantanamo, we're only hearing one side of the story, and that's because in this situation, unlike the Gitmo play, there is no other side. Had Nasser or Assad or Saddam or the Ayatollahs had nuclear weapons there would have been no pacing the floor all night pondering the burthens of history. It would just have been: Boom! The Jewish question solved once and for all. Hashemi Rafsanjani, the former Iranian President, has already promised as much.

That's why the stiffness of Gibson's playmaking doesn't really matter. I found myself rolling my eyes initially at the author's crude attempts to fuse the personal and the political. "How does a housewife decide between generals?" wonders the Prime Minister, momentarily torn between conflicting advice and then stiffening herself: "I'm not a housewife." But you begin to understand how difficult it would be to apply these mid-century Broadway rules of humanized biography to almost any other government leader in the Middle East. Saddam didn't agonize over gassing, raping, killing. It is the fact that, under her great responsibility, Golda Meir *is* a housewife, a normal woman with the same human impulses to children, to civilian casualties, to loss of life, that makes it possible to get a decent middlebrow drama out of her. Try doing that with Boy Assad.

Will the half-century old "Zionist moment" last on Broadway? I'm not sure. It is possible that the almost universal hatred of Israel among the European artistic class will one day manifest itself here. In that sense, the final scene of the new *Fiddler on the Roof* is freighted with more foreboding than the apocalyptic abyss on which *Golda's Balcony* looks. But it is already utterly impossible to imagine this play running a year in Vienna or Paris or even London, and that reflects very poorly on them.

Forthcoming in *The New Criterion:*

On the 1939 World's Fair *by Jeffrey Hart*
Truman Capote reconsidered *by Brooke Allen*
The legacy of Donald Justice *by David Yezzi*
Philip Larkin today *by Dan Jacobson*
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Art

Gallery chronicle

by James Panero

In the art world, "democracy" means wearing a t-shirt that says "The only Bush I trust is my own." It means pinning a button to your shirt that reads "I only sleep with Democrats" or "Dykes for Bush." It also means dancing around to a punk band while dressed as a carrot, bringing your kids to frolic in a wooden cage marked "Abu Ghraib," buying cookies with icing that reads "Bush is an a--h----," spotting demi-celebrities crossing 10th Avenue (Sandra Bernhardt? Tom Verlaine? Björk?), and chatting up like-minded friends in the elevator to the open bar with "Didn't I see you at the party last night? Weren't you wearing a gold lamé dress? Are you Icelandic? Do you know Björk?"

"Democracy" is an art term that means "Elect Kerry." It is also an art term that means "You might get to see the Icelandic pop-star Björk." I learned such lessons the other Sunday at a fundraiser called "The Liberty Fair," sponsored by Downtown for Democracy. D4D is a Political Action Committee that uses soft money raised in the arts community to pressure uninformed citizens in swing states to vote for John Kerry. The fair blocked off Twenty-Second Street between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues in the heart of Chelsea's gallery district on Sunday, September 12, just for this purpose. The event cost $50 for general tickets and $500 for a VIP pass with better access to Björk. Here is how D4D described the fundraiser on its website:

> The Fair's booths, stalls, performances and entertainment put an avant-garde spin on New York City's famed street festivals, with shades of Ye Olde Village Fayre, and appealed to both art connoisseurs and their children. There was cookie decorating and face painting with some of America's top artists; t-shirts and tattoos specially created for the event by more contemporary art stars; a marching band and a kissing booth; a freak show, a confessional, an enormous decadent all-day feast; special cocktails, dancing, tarot cards, palm reading, makeovers and much more, all presented by your favorite visual artists, writers, performers, designers and dealers.

In reality, The Liberty Fair was a zoned-out dud, with unmanned tents collapsing in the wind and a smattering of paid guests milling about Twenty-Second Street. The one true highlight came around 5 p.m. when the couple of the moment—Matthew Barney and Björk—moseyed through the fair with Baby Barney and a stroller positioned like a cowcatcher flinging sycophants hither and yon. In its "Above and Beyond" listing of the fair, *The New Yorker* had written that Mr. Barney would be roasting a pig, thus crowning him frat-boy artist to the stars. No such luck, unless said pig was consumed very early in the event and its carcass quickly picked clean by ravenous vultures nesting in the High Line. Instead, we got an Icelandic nymph carrying a plastic bag from Radio Shack while wearing gold moon-boots and

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a poncho BeDazzlered with pearls. This is what "democracy" means to the art world.

In the September issue of *Artforum*, which was dedicated to the topic of art and politics, Arthur C. Danto wrote of the 2004 Whitney Biennial,

> American artists are on balance satisfied with the existing political structure. There was nothing in the 2004 Biennial that, were we to see it from the outside, would cause us to want to change the way we are for others. That may finally be the way that, for better or worse, the art in it was political.

Danto has a connoisseur's nose for politics as only an unreconstructed leftist can possess, and he is correct. The art world is far from political in the way that Danto or an activist artist like Hans Haacke would like it to be. This is not 1968. This is not even 1993, when the Whitney Museum held its most race conscious, politically dreary, in yo' face, sucka! Biennial in history.

When Danto argues that the art community is now satisfied with the "existing political structure," he does not mean that artists will be voting for Bush anytime soon. Far from it. But it is clear that the art world's commitment to anything other than itself is merely skin deep. In an environment where "everything is political," and with liberal politics as the default mode, very little in contemporary art imparts genuine political importance. Politics is a fashion statement of belonging and nothing more, just as an artist like Barney can be "shocking" in the most conservative and accepted and celebrated of ways.

At the 2004 Biennial, Danto noted that "one defining attitude of younger artists in the show was a nostalgia for a certain activism that had vanished from the scene." The art scene has rarely been more escapist than today. Artists makes a pastiche of the heroes of the past, identify with positionless politics, and take refuge in past events. *Is it any wonder why "democracy" here means "Elect John Kerry"?*

What we are seeing is not the politicization of art. *Pace* Walter Benjamin, this is the aestheticization of politics. The great irony of Danto's criticism is that he is appearing in a glossy magazine—*Artforum*—that is indistinguishable in size, shape, and content from the Fall 2004 Saks Fifth Avenue catalogue. Both advertise designers like Prada and Marc Jacobs. And where *Artforum* is not advertising a clothing designer, it is advertising artists whose work draws more times than not on the industries of fashion and pornography. Danto has merely supplied the ad copy and Penthouse Letter to the system, contributing to the very problem he seeks to criticize.

It is said that artists make the trend. But of course nations and cultures set the trend, and artists respond and recreate and record the trend, thereby creating the permanent reflections whereby we see the trend. Flaubert followed Napoleon to Egypt. Gauguin followed the well-sailed routes of literature's adventuremen to the South Seas. The New York School liberated Paris five years behind the allied armies. Art is an indication of the health of the culture, and the greatest periods in American art in the past hundred years ran concurrent to our most confident times: in the years leading up to World War I, in the 1920s, and following World War II through the mid-1960s. The modern movement collapsed at the same time, nearly to the second, that cultural confidence fell apart in the late 1960s. It saw a brief revival in spite of itself only in the 1980s under Reagan.

The New York Art Barometer has rarely looked bleaker than right now, with its catch-as-catch-can reheating of the Eighties scene: a half-hearted return to painting with some ACT UP rhetoric and cocaine optimism to boot. Nostalgia the second time around is even less vital than the first, and the thought that "all art is political" (as everyone says it has become) is far more frightening to me than the prospect of "political art," which at least leaves open the possibility of non-political art.

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The numbing idiocy of the art scene this fall is staggering. It sent everyone scrambling. Andrea Rosen Gallery may print "Are you registered to vote?" on its door, but the video art running inside the gallery (by Annik Larsson) is no less brain-dead. Cheim & Reid Gallery holds a fundraiser for John Kerry and is surprised to lose a major client (A Republican art buyer? Well, good riddance! says John Cheim).

Confidence will win out over doubt. The question is, what is going to give, and how? From where will the new vitality come? For a while now I have harbored the notion that outsider or "naive" art will refreshen the well, not through aesthetic novelty, but through the novelty of creating art that is necessary. The new American Folk Art Museum, rising next to the Museum of Modern Art, has shown the way with some superb recent shows. It is also possible that artists and scholars will defibrillate the movement of high modernism from its heart attack in the early 1970s. There is also a third possibility, suspect but equally plausible: the preponderance of unquestioned left-wing art will give rise to a right-wing countermovement engaging the notion that "all art is political"—which of course today means that "all art is left-wing."

One of the barbarians knocking at the gates is Scott LoBaido. A right-wing art activist and painter (yes, there is such a thing, creating portraits of Ronald Reagan, Rudolph Giuliani, and George W. Bush), LoBaido has been making news for two decades. He has also been arrested numerous times for activist stunts: for example, he invited reporters to Eastern Parkway and hurled horse manure at the façade of the Brooklyn Museum in response to Chris Ofili's *Holy Virgin Mary*, famously created with a collage of pornographic images and elephant dung. He also caused a minor disturbance at the 1993 Whitney Biennial.

Daniel J. Martinez, the artist who created the racializing museum tags for that show (one read "I can't imagine ever wanting to be white"), is back this month with a gallery installation based on Ted Kaczynski's hideout, decorated in Martha Stewart paints. Why is it that a phony art activist like Martinez can find gallery space on Fifty-Seventh Street but LoBaido operates on the margins? The lie of the contemporary avant-garde is that it is radical. Anything but. This lie became a little more apparent in September after a show of LoBaido's work at "Tribute," a gallery located in lower Manhattan off Broadway, just to the right of that sculpture of the bull-market bull, and way outside the art-world center.[1] Although turned down by every mainstream gallery, LoBaido received sustained media exposure that should be the envy of any artist for this exhibition, which was timed to run during the Republican National Convention. He generated large writeups in *The New York Times*, *Roll Call*, and the Associated Press, not to mention appearances on cable news. Nevertheless, I had not heard of Tribute Gallery before encountering LoBaido in the *Times*, and I have yet to notice LoBaido listed in any art publication, even after the media hits. In other words, while a known commodity, and based in New York (albeit, *ahem*, in Staten Island), LoBaido continues to work wholly outside the art establishment.

"I don't have a nickel to my name." LoBaido met me at his show a few days before its closing. He is thirty-nine, a tough, his hair slicked back, speaking in outerborough staccato with that central-casting, wise-guy lilt. He is eagerly awaiting the latest Britney Spears video, so he tells me, due out later that afternoon. "The art world? I'm here to shake it up. I've been doing this for twenty years. Why? Because the arts are so important to us." He waves a printed-out email from a supporter. "This guy is filthy rich. Does the art world know about me? The art world knows about me. But they won't write a f------ thing about me . . . excuse me. I want them to criticize my brush strokes. I have a message to deliver, but my

1 "Scott LoBaido" was on view at Tribute Gallery from August 25 through September 20, 2004.

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message is on canvas. What happened to the excitement in art? I'm the rebel. I'm the Abbie Hoffman."

LoBaido walked me through his paintings. One image featured a larger-than-life-size portrait of our fortieth president in front of the American flag ("Who is my biggest influence? Is it Picasso? No. Ronald Reagan"). Another painting, even larger, called *Peace Through Strength*, showed an American flag with the outline in reverse of a dove and a fighter jet ("F16, fully loaded").

LoBaido got his start in the 1980s painting flag murals in Staten Island and "Led Zeppelin on dungaree jackets." His style is photorealist and street with elements of the surreal. His subject matter is pop and politics and kitsch. When not painting politicians, he creates dream-like scenarios that feature the Rat Pack; Spears is also a recurring character.

Many of LoBaido's political paintings place figures in fantasy scenarios. *KO* depicts President Bush knocking out Michael Moore—based on an image from the Ali-Foreman fight. *Nunzio's Pride* is a portrait of a three-legged dog on three pedestals carrying a flag around his waist ("That's my dog. He's become a patriot because of all the talk radio I listen to. I adopted him. We met each other in a bar"). A more fantastic and less photorealistic image called *The New York Giants: FDNY-RUDY-NYPD* shows the heros of September 11 in the guise of Saint George slaying the dragon ("I stole the horses from Rubens"). Another image: George W. Bush's fantasy NASCAR vehicle about to run over a donkey ("I'm a big NASCAR fan. If you know anything about NASCAR, it's a patriotic event. I saw Bush at the Indianapolis 500. This is how George Bush's car should look"). There is also Bush holding up the head of Osama bin Laden in the pose of the headless horseman—a painting called *Have Faith* (this was the image featured in LoBaido's *Times* article).

It wouldn't take much imagination to envision LoBaido invited to a Whitney Biennial. His art, which comments directly on the American experience, and which is no worse, technically, than the work of many of his left-wing counterparts, might be considered a political novelty and some insurance against the complaints of bias. Yet it could also be that such work would knock the pastiche of politics right out of art. The art world, with its illusions of engagement, is scared of nothing more than such a challege. Beyond his politics, this is the threat posed by an artist like LoBaido.

One painter who screams artist-of-the-moment is Will Cotton. He is a rising, glossy star who paints in what one might call the contemporary academic mode. If John Currin is the Ingres of this school, Cotton is Delaroche. His latest large paintings at Mary Boone feature nudes in candied landscapes that are sexually suggestive without conveying a meaning more significant than their own producibility.[2] Cotton is a technical painter and clearly banks on his skills to back up his laughable scenes: a curly red-haired nude supine on a puff of pink clouds (*Cotton Candy Cloud*), a figure in lace underwear reclining in a forest of toffee wrappers and swirled lollypops (*Untitled*), a gamine figure relaxing amidst Hershey pine-cones (*Kisses*), and a black woman with white cream smeared across her buttocks in *Ice Cream Cavern* (Ooh, is this one about race?). The writeup for the show informs us that Cotton paints elaborate dioramas of candy, then cut-and-pastes his nudes into the images. The results are partly Matthew Barney and partly Barneys New York. When he is not painting, by the way, Cotton decorates cookies for The Liberty Fair. That about sums up the depth of this artist.

But didn't September feature its share of modern masters, you ask? If you went looking for it, yes. Salander-O'Reilly put on a sleeper hit called, of all things, "Modern Masters," Mary Ryan Gallery exhibited the prints of Joan Mitchell, Alexandre Gallery

2 Will Cotton at Mary Boone Chelsea Gallery opened on September 11 and remains on view through October 24, 2004.

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had the tiny paintings of Lois Dodd, and Barbara Mathes Gallery held up the modern masters to some contemporary painters.[3]

The Salander show contained one of the best Adolph Gottliebs you'll ever see (*Burning Red*, 1973), as well as a bold Marsden Hartley from 1933–1934 (*Garmisch, Partenkirchen*). Mary Ryan's Mitchell prints were a more mixed lot, considering the unalloyed triumph of Mitchell's Whitney retrospective two years ago. The Bedford series from 1981: muddy, the colors crashing into one another. The 1992 diptychs, however, overcame these problems by dividing the color layers into separate fields. Here was an abstract expressionist refining her art up to the very end (she died that same year). None of the integrity was lost in this late work, and the lyrical clarity remained—in fact, it rang forth.

The Dodd paintings at Alexandre resound in a different way. Dodd has produced fifty works on five-by-seven panels, each a painter's snapshot of nature's wonders: fields, a garden, the seascape, a host of flowers, the eclipse of the moon. Dodd blocks out color-space in the Milton Avery mode, but she is softer than the master, a little less hard-edged and a little more at ease. The easiness does not necessarily translate into great painterly achievement in each five-by-seven card, but Dodd reaches a beautiful conclusion through the collective powers of her painted moments.

The Mathes exhibition pitted seven contemporary artists again such masters as Ad Reinhardt and David Smith. Though they tried, the contemporary team did not rise to the occasion—Lance Goldsmith and most notably John Zinsser came the closest. Lesson learned: the champions of twentieth-century modernism have yet to be bettered. The modern movement still provides the most renewable energy source known to art—and a force to be reckoned with. This show testifies to that fact.

A final, small surprise for the art season was Ai Weiwei. His exhibition at Robert Miller Gallery is his first in New York since 1988.[4] Ai Weiwei is a Chinese artist and the son of Ai Quing, one of China's most celebrated poets. Exiled as a boy from Beijing thanks to the Cultural Revolution, Ai Weiwei made his way to New York City in 1981 to study at Parsons and to reject the propaganda art of the Chinese communist regime. Here he fell under the influence of Duchamp, Dada, and Conceptual Art (oh well). He became a political, conceptual artist.

When I first heard of this show, I thought, now here is a low-point. Miller did not miss a beat in capitalizing on Ai Weiwei's most banal icon in its advertizing: the word "F---," painted in huge neon letters on four large panels, was reproduced on the exhibition mailers. But Ai Weiwei is a more complex artist than this one piece leads you to believe: he can create a terrifying sculpture of bicycles (think old Beijing), a wooden bench in the shape of China, and a series of photographs with him flipping the bird at world monuments. This artist is angry. You know what? He has a right to be angry.

One of the defining images of the show is a photograph of Ai Weiwei giving the up-yours to the White House. This image has been separated from the series and placed in the front window of the exhibition window. Aha, you think, another anti-Bush exhibition. It is only once inside that you notice the date of this great work: 1995.

3 "Modern Masters" opened at Salander-O'Reilly Galleries on September 8. "Lois Dodd: Flashings" opened at Alexandre Gallery on September 1. Joan Mitchell opened at Mary Ryan Gallery on July 14. They each remain on view through October 2, 2004. "Under the Influence" opened at Barbara Mathes Gallery on July 30 and remains on view through October 9, 2004.

4 Ai Weiwei opened at Robert Miller Gallery on September 9 and remains on view through October 9, 2004.

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Music

Salzburg chronicle

by Jay Nordlinger

At the Salzburg Festival, Mozart and Richard Strauss are recurring figures—Mozart the hometown boy, Strauss one of the founders of the festival—but this season Dvořák and Korngold assumed prominence. The former composer died in 1904, and, as the music world is eternally infected with anniversaryitis, that centenary had to be exploited. And Korngold? It is the goal of the festival's artistic director, Peter Ruzicka, to highlight and honor exiled composers, or those otherwise disfavored by the Nazis. Next season, Franz Schreker will be featured.

The air in Salzburg rang with Dvořák from the beginning of the festival: The Vienna Philharmonic, under Seiji Ozawa, played the "New World" Symphony. There followed concertos, chamber music, songs, etc. Superintending a special project was Thomas Hampson, the baritone from Spokane. This was called "Dvořák and His Times." Hampson is seen increasingly as a musical intellectual, and the first line of his current bio stresses that he is "involved in the fields of musicology and pedagogy." The photograph shows him in spectacles, studying a score—this is not the glamour figure from the operatic stage; but it is glamorous in a way.

"Dvořák and His Times" consisted of two programs, the first a fairly standard song recital by Hampson. It included a set of Dvořák songs—the *Zigeunerlieder*—along with sets of Liszt, Mahler, and Strauss. The *Zigeunerlieder* are relatively unfamiliar, except for the item we know in English as "Songs My Mother Taught Me." Hampson sang in Czech, although one could do German, too. Dvořák was a strong song composer, and it's a pity we don't know more of this music. Hampson's performance suggested we should. I suspect that Dvořák is handicapped by the unusualness of his language—Czech. This may be changing, however, as Janáček's operas rise in popularity. (Janáček, by the way, was born in 1854, so this is an anniversary year for him, too—although he is not featured in Salzburg. You can't do everybody.)

Hampson's second program was a long one—a "marathon," it was dubbed—involving three other singers as well: Barbara Bonney, the soprano, Michelle Breedt, a mezzo-soprano, and Georg Zeppenfeld, a bass. (At the piano was Wolfram Rieger, Hampson's regular accompanist, and an excellent pianist.) The program featured a lot of Dvořák, but also American songs, as befitted an adventurer to the New World: Zeppenfeld sang Negro spirituals, and Hampson sang forgotten songs by Arthur Farwell and Charles Wakefield Cadman, along with selections from MacDowell and Ives. Filling out the program were Brahms, Mahler, and Grieg.

If you like musicological endeavors onstage, this evening had merit. Regardless, the Salzburg Festival is obviously willing to

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give Thomas Hampson, one of its biggest stars, his head.

An evening in the Felsenreitschule was alloted to Dvořák's Requiem. This is not an especially well-known work, commissioned by England's Birmingham Festival in the 1890s. Visiting Salzburg to perform it were the Czech Philharmonic and Chorus, conducted by Gerd Albrecht. This conductor—a German—has little reputation in the United States, which is a shame. He is an excellent conductor, probably in the twilight of his career. For three seasons in the 1990s, he led this orchestra, the Czech Philharmonic, and he is now in charge of the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra and the Danish National Orchestra. In Dvořák's Requiem, he showed intelligence, mastery, and heart. He projected a solidity, a tightness. Every page cohered, and nothing was without a purpose. Albrecht is a commonsensical conductor, common sense being an underappreciated virtue in that breed (and among musicians in general).

Some examples of his musical common sense: When the Dies irae came, it came with terror, but not with what we might call a stage terror—a surfeit of theatricality. When the Quid sum miser ended, it did not do so with a false hushed emotion; it did so naturally, inevitably. Often, the conductor gave this work a light, chamber feel, without making it wrongly skimpy. Above all, I would describe him as honest—an honest conductor, an honest musician, without superficiality or intrusive ego.

He had with him a fine quartet of solo singers, starting with a substitute, the soprano Danielle Halbwachs, filling in for an indisposed Soile Isokoski. Halbwachs seemed more than ready for her part. She knew the letter of it, and she knew the spirit of it. She boasted a beautiful, exotic sound, which she did not force. Now and then, that sound turned hard—but there was nothing hard about the high, *mezzo-piano* B flat she sang in the Hostias. I can hear it, gratefully, even now, as I write.

The mezzo-soprano was the well-known Finn Monica Groop, who proved a powerhouse, though not in volume: more in thought, and in her expression of that thought. When appropriate, she imparted some tonal bite, and also a bit of a throb. In the Domine, Jesu Christe, she suffered some flatness, but otherwise she was completely creditable. As was the tenor, Piotr Beczala, a Pole. He is light of voice, but solid. He sounded a little like Nicolai Gedda up top, with that pinchedness—one could have a worse voice. Like Danielle Halbwachs, he resisted the temptation to push. And when he sang lyrically, he was very lyric—tender—but did not croon. Beczala, a tenor unknown on American shores, is a commodity to watch.

And the bass? Perhaps the most lauded bass in the world, René Pape. He has dropped jaws in recital, oratorio, and, of course, opera. Probably his most famous part is King Mark, from *Tristan und Isolde*. When he sang in the Dvořák Requiem, it was hard not to think of King Mark. In the Lacrimosa, for example, that voice might have been denouncing Tristan and Isolde, betrayers—though unwitting betrayers—of the king. Pape was beautiful and arresting, as usual, and his language was amazingly clear—again as usual.

The Czech Philharmonic was well prepared, and it performed faithfully; the same can be said of the chorus. One might expect that these Czechs would present this work with particular knowledge, feeling, and pride—and that is what happened. Dvořák's Requiem is not as good as Verdi's, to which it is sometimes compared. It is uneven, and eventually runs out of creative gas. But it has its moments—for example, those stirring Bachian sequences in the Recordare—and Gerd Albrecht made as convincing a case for it as possible.

The festival was chock-a-block with recitals, particularly vocal recitals. Besides Hampson's two, we heard from Karita Mattila, Waltraud Meier, Thomas Quasthoff, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky. Hvorostovsky's program featured Mussorgsky's *Songs and*

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Dances of Death, which this singer traversed grippingly. Last season, his great countryman, the mezzo-soprano Olga Borodina, sang this cycle in Carnegie Hall. I said, "That's it—I don't need to hear it again; this is the ultimate." But I was wrong: Hvorostovsky was just as good, just as harrowing (if somewhat different).

On one especially hot night, Violeta Urmana appeared in the Grosser Saal of the Mozarteum. And when it is hot at the festival—especially in the Mozarteum—it is cruelly hot. The room is not air-conditioned, and they shut the doors tight. In 2003, I nicknamed the Grosser Saal the "Grosser Sauna." For years, air conditioning—or the lack of it—has been a point of contention at the festival. Some administrators claim that, much as they would love to accommodate the public, the musicians themselves balk at air conditioning. This is hard to believe (for example, when watching them suffering onstage along with the audience). The tenor Michael Schade said, at a forum last year, "I propose to start a new political party in Austria: the Air Conditioning Party." Sign me up, Michael.

Urmana dabbed at herself throughout the evening, but she could not be defeated. This Lithuanian is, quite simply, one of the greatest singers in the world, possessed of one of the greatest voices in the world. The program said "Violeta Urmana, mezzo-soprano"—but she is becoming a soprano, or has actually become one. In opera, she is probably best known for the role of Kundry, in Wagner's *Parsifal*. (Her performances opposite Plácido Domingo have been . . . well, I don't think "historic" would be too strong.) As Kundry, she has sung some frighteningly excellent high notes. Her Salzburg recital showed her to be a full-blown soprano. Or is she?

It is a hard-to-categorize voice, which is all to the good: Urmana will be an all-purpose singer. The voice has the strength—the body—associated with a mezzo; but it has a range belonging to a soprano—and, at the lower end, to a mezzo! As she sang one phrase, I thought, "If she's a soprano, that's a hell of a lower register"; a couple of phrases later, I thought, "If she's a mezzo, that's a hell of an upper register."

Urmana sang a varied program, in a fairly unusual order: She began with *La fraicheur et le feu*, the cycle of Poulenc. At her side was the pianist Jan Philip Schulze, a German. In the Poulenc, he showed himself to be a real pianist, negotiating Poulenc's passages, which can be tough. Schulze was adequately Impressionistic, but clean.

Urmana sang these songs with great tastefulness, and, of course, that glorious voice, just a little scaled down for the hall. She is a smart singer, who shapes a song to maximum effect. Always, she gives off an overarching musical sense—this is more than a knockout voice. The Poulenc songs were sung naturally, musically, without an overemphasis on text. In "Homme au sourire tendre," Urmana handled some jazzy intervals fetchingly. She also shows a little theatrical flair on the recital stage—which is no damnable thing.

Next came a group of Liszt songs, beginning with "Der Fischerknabe." Urmana sings an excellent German, thanks to her years of study and work in Germany. "Der Fischerknabe" uses an eerie poem (Schiller) about the water luring a boy to his drowning. Urmana strained just a little on her high *piano* notes, but otherwise she rendered the song compellingly. So it was with "Die Fischerstochter," a virtual scena. It was a delight to hear such strength in this song/scena, and in the other Liszt songs (and in the Poulenc, for that matter). Urmana could have been criticized for making these songs too "operatic"—but they are not porcelain figures, to be kept under glass.

She moved on to a Rachmaninoff group, which included the song we know in English as "In the Quiet of the Secret Night." This is maybe the best loved of Rachmaninoff's songs, and Urmana treated it richly and beautifully. Its final (sung) phrase is one of the most famous in all the song literature: It is long, lovely, and ascending, and is ideally sung in one breath.

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When Urmana started out, it seemed too slow to be accomplished in one breath, but that was okay, as two is certainly acceptable—but no: She sang the phrase slowly, and deliciously, and needed no second breath. In fact, she seemed to have breath left over! Remarkable.

Then, after intermission, it was all Strauss, as Urmana made the wise decision to wrap that instrument around the composer so besotted by the female voice—especially big, bold, lush ones. You think of Strauss singers of recent times: Leontyne Price, Jessye Norman, Renée Fleming. Urmana has a sharper edge than any of those women—is less lush—but she can take a place beside them.

In "Frühlingsgedränge," Urmana had spring in her voice—and springtime love. "Lob des Leidens," she did not take at a ponderous tempo, thank goodness; and when she sang the words "Herbstes goldenem Licht" ("golden light of autumn"), we unmistakably heard that. The beloved, grateful song "Zueignung" was surprisingly scaled down, almost intimate—and that final note had a noble swelling. "Befreit" is one of the most heartbreaking of Strauss songs—probably the most—and Urmana resisted the temptation to sing it too slowly, or tremblingly. It was therefore properly moving. "Schlechtes Wetter" had swing and lightness (lightness not of voice, but of spirit). And here Jan Philip Schulze—who had been disagreeably choppy through much of the Strauss—applied exactly the right touch.

Finishing the set was "Frühlingsfeier," one of the most strange of Strauss songs (with its cries of "Adonis! Adonis!"). Urmana showed off some of those outrageous Kundry notes—outrageously thrilling. The audience in the Mozarteum went wild, asking for many encores, with which Urmana was both generous and shrewd. First, it was a return to Poulenc, his song "Le violin," which was insinuating and saucy (but in which Schulze was far too blunt). Then it was a quick return to Strauss, his song "Cäcilie," maybe his most rapturous—and slain by Urmana. And then . . . a big, mad opera aria, maybe the biggest and maddest, "Suicidio!" from *La Gioconda*. The injection of a crazy-nuts opera aria into a song recital was, I think, daring and effective. After that, something excitingly Spanish—by Fernando Obradors—and that was it, although the audience begged for more, including with rhythmic clapping.

Is there anything in music more satisfying than a brilliant soprano in recital—a recital whose program is varied? I sort of doubt it.

And now to Korngold, one of the men of the hour. He may be best known as a movie composer, for he spent many years in Hollywood, exiled from his native Vienna. But he had been a child prodigy—the most remarkable since Mozart—and many of us have long nursed a fondness for his concert music.

The Salzburg Festival gave us gobs of it, including the violin concerto, the Symphonic Serenade, the symphony, and several chamber pieces—most notably the Suite for Two Violins, Cello, and Piano Left Hand, commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein, the pianist who lost his right arm in World War I. In recent decades, both Leon Fleisher and Gary Graffman have had to make heavy use of that suite. And it is an ingenious, lovable work, winningly performed in the Mozarteum by an ensemble whose lead violinist was Benjamin Schmid, the young Austrian sensation.

But the major Korngold work presented in Salzburg was his opera *Die Tote Stadt*, his most enduring work for the stage. This is the opera based on Rodenbach's novel *Bruges-la-Morte*. It is most famous for one aria, "Marietta's Lied," which decades ago achieved almost a pop status. But the work as a whole must be drunk in. It speaks longing, nostalgia, torment, heartbreak, and finally healing. The score can be fizzy, and it can be profound, and—most interestingly—it can be both at the same time.

Into the Kleines Festspielhaus came the Vienna Philharmonic, led by the Scots conductor Donald Runnicles. The orchestra sounded magnificent, as it is wont to do

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(and as it sounded in *Così fan tutte*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and others of the festival's operas as well). For the hundredth time, one wondered how the brass could be so warm. And when Korngold's score got violent, it was beautifully violent (or violently beautiful), in that cushioned, Vienna Philharmonic way—a way particularly apt for this extremely Viennese composer, and this extremely Viennese work.

Unfortunately, the orchestra covered the singers much of the time, and those singers were often placed in the back of the stage. Certainly, the instruments of the orchestra should be heard—always—but those vocal lines should be heard, too, and Runnicles should have made it all possible. And yet, there is Straussian precedent for drowning out singers: Opera buffs know the famous anecdote in which the composer, supervising a rehearsal, calls to the conductor, "Louder, louder, I can still hear the Heink!" ("The Heink" was the legendary German mezzo-soprano Ernestine von Schumann-Heink.) In general, Runnicles acquitted himself well, maintaining a momentum, for example.

The singers have interesting and impossibly Romantic lines to sing. The soprano is Marietta, and she was sung by Angela Denoke. At the Easter Festival in 2003, she had the title role in *Fidelio*, and she had a miserable, constricted night (when I heard her). She was all freed up, however, on this night in *Tote Stadt*. She had command of her part, and if I prefer more vibrato and flexibility in the voice, that is simply a preference, and Denoke's characteristics—which include a slight hootiness and stiffness—are perfectly acceptable. "Marietta's Lied" was overindulged, but it recalled the Old World, no doubt about that—and cast a spell on the audience.

Perhaps Denoke's greatest strength was theatrical: She approached her part boldly, with total involvement, as much actress as singer. And at one point, Marietta asks Paul (the tenor), "Am I not pretty?" She is—Denoke, I mean, and altogether alluring, which completes the picture.

Paul is a difficult, high-lying part, and Torsten Kerl handled it superbly. He possesses one of the most beautiful instruments in tenordom, an instrument rich but not heavy, and lush but still ringing. (The latter combo, in particular, is hard to find.) Prominent in his arsenal is a gorgeous head voice, which Korngold gave him many opportunities to employ.

Smashingly good was the production of Willy Decker, a German director. It was imaginative yet faithful—faithful to the opera as Korngold conceived it. It is said of us "conservatives" that we don't like "modern" productions. No: We don't like modern productions—or any productions—that are stupid, or malicious, or indefensible.

Paul's house is, as the libretto puts it, "a cathedral of the has-already-been"—a dark shrine to a deadening past—and this was portrayed almost to perfection. In due course, Paul falls into a dream, and then this production got topsy-turvy: The ceiling and floor moved, like amusement-park tilt-a-whirls, and goblins haunted the protagonist everywhere. The fever of this fellow's mind was horribly apparent. And then . . . he wakes up, the ceiling and floor taking their normal places, along—at last—with Paul's mind. With the music of the "Lied" playing, he walks out of the dark room, into light.

"A triumph," as critics say, when looking for a shorthand. But the triumph, mainly, was Korngold's, this child of Vienna, child of Austro-German culture, back, in some fashion, from exile.

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The media

Rhetorical recklessness

by James Bowman

When I was American editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* during the Clinton era, the paper published an article by the philosopher Thomas Nagel on the Monica Lewinsky affair that was much cited by Clinton's apologists at the time. It was a plea for President Clinton to be spared the obnoxious probing of his private life that had yielded a bumper crop of headlines and that was eventually to lead to his impeachment. In the course of his article, Professor Nagel wrote that he now regretted his own support, seven years before, for a similar probing of the private life of the Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas by Democrats bent on denying him Senate confirmation. So apparently casual was this aside, however, that a copy editor cut it for space, and it was only the vigilance of Ferdinand Mount, the editor at the time, during a final read-through that caught the omission and restored it.

Mr. Mount saw at once that this concession, this acknowledgment of error, was essential to the article's seriousness. Without it, Nagel's plea would hardly have been a real argument and could have been dismissed as just another partisan rant of a kind that was common at the time and has become even more common since. Six years later it has become even easier for our public controversialists to ignore the presence of that silent interlocutor who used to whisper in our ear when we were exaggerating or contradicting ourselves or being unfair to the other side. Now the presence of even the most modest concessionary clause comes as a surprise, and two or three of them have the power to get you labeled a moderate. Yet they are important signs of the writer's rhetorical conscience and of his moral seriousness—and that he means to write to persuade those who disagree as well as to elicit cheers from those who already agree with him.

The absence of any shame in self-contradiction among our journalistic and political controversialists today is a powerful indication that they only expect to be heard by the already-persuaded. In other words, communication has ceased. Even a dishonest or sophistical attempt to justify such rhetorical lapses would be evidence that shame persists and therefore that the other side's arguments, however distorted and belittled, still have the power to disturb us. But when self-contradiction is simply ignored, nothing further in the way of rational discourse can be expected. For the political game to work, each side must be prepared to return the service of the other, but the current election season makes it more evident than ever not only that the game is over but also that the ever-dwindling minority of the politically interested who cheer as each side cannons its shots into the fence without regard for the other no longer wish to see a game but merely a display of emotion.

It seems unlikely that we will ever see a

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more comprehensive demonstration of the end of political discourse, at least for the time being, than the media's treatment of the story that, as I write, looks as if it may prove to have been the undoing of Senator Kerry's candidacy for the presidency. Professor Nagel's conscience was able to stretch back seven years to catch on a self-contradiction, but in all the media coverage I read of the ads by the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth in August—coverage that was almost nonexistent until Kerry realized he had to answer them—I didn't notice anyone who could even remember as far back as seven months. Then, in February, Terry McAuliffe had invited voters to picture "John Kerry, a war hero with a chest full of medals . . . standing next to George Bush, a man who was AWOL in the Alabama National Guard." The media went off in full cry after the missing records that might have proved that the President had gone AWOL or worse. Michael Moore openly called him a "deserter" and was not corrected by the Democratic presidential candidate General Wesley Clark, at one of whose campaign events he said it—or any other Democrat.

Back then, when the supposed scandal made the cover of *Newsweek*, I don't remember anyone's saying that searching through military records and the recollections of contemporaries for thirty-year-old scandal in order to discredit a presidential candidate was illegitimate or even tacky. By August, however, when the Swift Boat Veterans started running ads which questioned whether or not Senator Kerry was entitled to all the medals he had won during his four months in Vietnam, the outrage against them for so much as raising the question suggested a sudden access of conscience in the media. Now it was the scandal hunters who were dismissed out of hand as liars by those who had been digging around in George Bush's past only seven months before. The first piece in *The New York Times* even to mention that any aspersions had been cast against Kerry's war service set the tone for the rest of the media by being directed not to the verification or denial of the veterans' claims but to an attempt to find any links—which would be illegal under new campaign finance legislation—between them and the Bush campaign.

As John O'Sullivan wrote at the time, it was reminiscent of the days in the old Soviet Union when attentive readers of *Pravda* or *Isvestia* had to wait until "anti-Soviet lies" were denounced before they had any idea of what was being said in the West—and what, therefore, was likely to be the truth. Here too, the obviousness of the media's attempt to suppress what would, if alleged against the other side, have been a major news story was more likely to have hurt than helped Senator Kerry. If the scandal-happy media were suppressing news of a scandal, there must be something more than the usual potency about it. The *Times* only ran its piece after Kerry, having tried to ignore the charges, saw that they were damaging him and fired back—also not on the substance but on the putative links to the Bush campaign whose "dirty work" the veterans were doing, said Kerry. Then all the media joined in, opening the floodgates for a torrent of abuse and invective aimed at the Swift Boat Veterans. But this only served further to damage the Kerry campaign.

For the veterans had been clever. Their first wave of ads had elicited an outpouring of anger and execration, but then they produced a second wave of ads calling attention to Kerry's anti-war activities in 1971. A former prisoner of war in North Vietnam—whose sufferings, after all, were beyond dispute—said that Kerry had given up for nothing what years of torture couldn't get from him—that is, an acknowledgment that American troops had engaged in war crimes. Now whatever may have been the truth about Kerry's behavior on the Bay Hap river in March of 1969, his Senate testimony and other anti-war speeches were on the record and undeniable and could hardly be dismissed as an irrelevancy in the present contest. But devastating as this ad might have been in any case,

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it was made much more so by the overreaction to the earlier series of ads. Kerry, the master of "nuance," had shown a becoming sense of embarrassment about some of his anti-war activities—though not nearly enough of one in the view of many of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. In particular, he had claimed to regret some of his words in testimony before a Senate committee, though not his overall anti-war stance—as if the accusation of his "brothers in arms" as war criminals had been just a matter of a poor choice of words. Still, even so much of an apology as this seemed to have laid the matter to rest until the Swift Boat Veterans' ads.

But opening fire on the ads and the veterans themselves must have proved a cathartic experience for the media because they made no attempt to distinguish between the doubtful ones which questioned Kerry's medals and the much more tricky ones that questioned the recklessness and disloyalty of some of his anti-war activities. A favorite tactic of the pro-Kerry press was to point out, like Byron Pitts of CBS, that one of the leaders of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, John O'Neill, had been "handpicked by the Nixon administration to discredit Kerry" or that he was "Nixon's point man." Imagine the nerve of old Tricky Dicky, looking around for a way to defend himself against accusations of war crimes—and then picking somebody who'd actually served where Kerry had served in order to rebut his claims with authority. How low can you sink? Old reliable Maureen Dowd likewise called O'Neill "the Nixon tool" and went on to what was for her a routine impugning of the President's honor, writing that "It makes sense for W. to use surrogates to do his fighting, just as he did when he slid out of Vietnam and just as he did when he sent our troops to fight his administration's misbegotten vanity war in Iraq." Of course she never mentions the comparable treatment meted out to Bush by Kerry surrogates.

The media's unnuanced hostility to the veterans and their ads was directed at the first wave and the second alike, which made it look as if Kerry were also defiant and unrepentant about having made the reckless accusations for which he had earlier apologized. Voters who might otherwise have turned their noses up at what could still have been presented as sleazy gossip-mongering or partisan distortions subsequently had a reason to take them more seriously, since criticism of them was also directed at those who still resented what they saw as Kerry's disloyalty. If neither the candidate nor the media chose to differentiate between the two kinds of ads, maybe the first ones were as legitimate as the second obviously were to those for whom loyalty was paramount. This could account for the sudden drop in Kerry's poll numbers, particularly among veterans. Many of them must have felt like Bob Dole, crippled for life by his injuries in the Second World War, who was unlikely to have been drawn into questioning the seriousness of Kerry's wounds, as he did on CNN, until he was irritated into it by the indiscriminate obloquy heaped on the Swift Boat Veterans even for legitimate criticisms.

"He's got himself into this wicket now where he can't extricate himself because not every one of these people can be Republican liars," said Dole. "There's got to be some truth to the charges." And why? Well, maybe because "one day he's saying that we were shooting civilians, cutting off their ears, cutting off their heads, throwing away his medals or his ribbons [and] the next day he's standing there: 'I want to be president because I'm a Vietnam veteran.' Maybe he should apologize to all the other 2.5 million veterans who served. He wasn't the only one in Vietnam." In fact he had apologized, sort of, but it was hardly surprising if, under the circumstances, that fact were lost sight of, and Dole went on to scathing remarks about Kerry's honorable wounds. "Three Purple Hearts and never bled that I know of. I mean, they're all superficial wounds. . . . And as far as I know, he's never spent one day in the hospital. I don't think he draws any dis-

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ability pay. He doesn't have any disability. And boasting about three Purple Hearts when you think of some of the people who really got shot up in Vietnam." It was a reminder of an older standard of honor—one which might otherwise never have been brought up—which looked down on those who boasted of their own heroism.

When President Bush was called upon by Kerry to denounce the Swift Boat Veterans he showed more restraint—and tactical good sense—by replying that he denounced all ads by third-party groups, which were blatant exercises in the evasion of campaign finance laws. Once again Kerry, who at the time must have thought of the much greater war-chest available to the Democrats through George Soros and others and imagined that he had more to gain from such ads than Bush, made another serious mistake in refusing to join the President in making such a denunciation. After all, it would only have been gracious of him to acknowledge that he couldn't expect to profit through his supporters from a technique he would deny to his opponent's supporters. Not only had he seemed to invite scrutiny of his past when at the Democratic convention he had made his Vietnam service and not his Senate career his chief qualification for the presidency, but he had also welcomed a similar scrutiny directed at George Bush's military record back in the spring, calling him at one point "a President who can't even show or prove that he showed up for duty in the National Guard." Here was a chance to extricate himself from an awkward position. It would only have been smart politics to say: "Let's agree to leave the subject of who did what during the Vietnam war behind us."

But Kerry must have thought that without Vietnam he had too little to recommend him as Commander-in-Chief. At any rate, so little did he care for the appearance of having one standard for himself and another for the President that it never seems to have occurred to him to dissociate himself even from a new round of anti-Bush frenzy sparked by the appearance of some apparently damaging documents about the President's National Guard career on "60 Minutes." What an opportunity the "60 Minutes" charges might have been for him to issue a statesmanlike call to the media to call off its scandalmongering against both the President and himself! Not only would it have made him appear gracious towards the President, it would have done far more than all his denunciations of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to persuade people that they were only trying to drum up scandal against him as CBS was doing against Bush. But it was becoming ever clearer that Kerry was not a gracious man, and could not rise above his dislike of his opponent even when it was in his own interest.

So persistently, in fact, so predictably had all the Democrats been led astray by their hatred for the incumbents in the White House that it almost began to appear as if there were some mastermind behind the scenes there baiting the traps into which they fell again and again. When the "60 Minutes" documents were shown to be forgeries by an alert Internet blogger, my first instinct was like that of George Stephanopoulos—a former campaign operative himself and so presumably alert to the deviousness with which such things are accomplished—to think that they must have been a set-up. And it might have seemed a fair enough ploy at that—to use, that is, one's opponent's unreasoning passion, his eagerness to seize even the most doubtful of weapons against one. A really clever strategist might well have concluded that his best course was to make the Democrats even more angry and hate-filled than they already were, and to entice them out of their own strategic avoidance of revealing such feelings with a fake scandal—which could then be used to discredit even legitimate doubts about Bush's past.

But if Karl Rove (or somebody) could have foreseen the eagerness with which the Democrats and their allies in the media would seize upon the bogus evidence to discredit the President—all the time, of course, they were continuing to insist that

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the questioning of Kerry's record by the Swift Boat Veterans was illegitimate—even he could hardly have dared hope that CBS and Dan Rather would have responded to the most damning evidence of forgery by stonewalling like a politician caught in misbehavior. Yet this is exactly what happened when Rather devoted nearly six minutes of "The CBS Evening News" on September 10 to defending the patently indefensible with astonishing disingenuousness in as dishonest a piece of journalism as I have ever seen on television. In doing so, he ensured that the more potentially damaging allegations against Bush—for instance that he had got into the Guard with the help of preferential treatment—were likely to be dismissed along with the false ones when the latter were shown, as they were bound to be shown, to be based on forgeries.

The most important and almost certainly infallible proof of the inauthenticity of a "memo to file" from Bush's former commanding officer, Col. Jerry Killian, was that it had been proportionally spaced. Before the age of computers and word processors, this could only have been done by a professional typesetter, yet this was supposed to have been an ordinary typewritten military memo, and only for his own files—files that the wife and son of Colonel Killian, who died in 1984, said he never kept. Other indications of non-contemporaneous composition—the Times New Roman typeface and the use of superscripts for ordinal numbers—were mere corroborating details. Yet Rather only answered, inadequately, the corroborating details. "Some" typewriters in 1972 were capable of superscripts, he said, and the origins of Times New Roman dated back to 1931. Sure they did. But the point was that it was not a normal typewriter typeface until the age of computers. And Rather never so much as mentioned the real clincher, which was the proportional spacing. Even the expert used to authenticate the documents in the first place now appeared to be retreating from his initial opinion, which had only authenticated the signature, but his brief interview with Rather was edited to make it appear that he was backing CBS's refusal to admit that it had been fooled.

Rather's shamelessness in simply ignoring the most powerful indication of the documents' falsity and then accusing those who had discovered it of having a "partisan" agenda—once again we see why the network newsmen are so desperate to preserve the polite fiction that they are nonpartisan themselves—was another indication of the woeful state into which public discourse has fallen. The more people accuse each other of lying, the easier it becomes to lie. So long as each side routinely makes such claims about the other anyway, what incentive does anyone have to be scrupulous about the truth? The media ought to be the referees in such cases, enforcing a very strict standard of proof on anyone wishing to bring forward the charge of bad faith. But the media engage in such rhetorical recklessness themselves, or stand idly by while charges of lying are hurled back and forth without a word to say against them. As in so many other ways, one has the feeling that there is no ground for the true nonpartisan to stand upon. Maybe that's what President Bush meant by noticing—surely a non-controversial observation?—that those who were not with him were against him.

Editor's note: We wish to call our readers' attention to the publication of *Artistic License: Three Centuries of Good Writing and Bad Behavior*, by Brooke Allen (Ivan R. Dee, $26.00), portions of which first appeared in *The New Criterion*.

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Books

The insider's insider

by John Russell

Joseph Duveen was born over his parents' shop in the back streets of Hull in October 1869. He ended his days in London in 1939 as a member of the House of Lords, an ever-dexterous pillar of the art trade and a key figure in the evolution of the Tate Gallery. Meryle Secrest, the author of *Duveen: A Life in Art*, has for many years been directly or indirectly on the track of her subject.[1] Duveen was born and bred to the art business. From his father, Joel Joseph Duveen, he inherited the eye, the memory, the passion for specialized knowledge, and the ability to dissemble. Never, for a moment, was he fooled. He was expected to make a mark by his early twenties, and he did.

If he was in a hurry to go to Holland, he got a ride on a Dutch fishing smack and came back with offers that enabled his employers to beat out the competition and make big profits. Already at twenty he knew the source of antiques and the markets for them. He was so smart, and so persuasive, that he could come back to England with fifty superfine Nanking vases and sell them even before the goods had arrived. (He himself had three months in which to pay the bills.)

He was initiative personified. To be the first on the scene at a great Dutch country seat, he would charter the fastest available horses. If the master of the house welcomed him with the offer of a drink, Duveen would say, "No, show us the art first," and make sure that he got it.

Just outside the Tate, a street is named after Lord Duveen of Millbank. Inside the Tate, his name turns up at every turn, and above all in the majestic Turner rooms, which form up almost as a secular cathedral. The Tate would not have opened at all in 1897 if Sir Henry Tate had not given the building, together with a collection of sixty-five "modern British" paintings. "The Tate" today now stands not only for the much-loved building on Millbank but for the Tate Modern by Giles Gilbert Scott, which is on the south bank of the Thames and offers one of the best of all views of St. Paul's Cathedral.

The existing Tate Gallery was enlarged and reshaped when Duveen gave the Turner wing in 1930. The tall and slender spaces that resulted were invaluable not only for Turner's paintings but also for the evolution of the Tate (and for its ongoing commitment to contemporary art). Tate paid for the buildings, and he is not forgotten. But Duveen was the insider's insider who put the Tate on everyone's map, once and for all.

He never paraded his importance. The Tate is still the Tate, and Tate Britain on the south bank of the Thames is its majestic extension. Duveen did not need panache, but he saw big, and he acted big. If the Tate Gallery is now in effect, though not in name, Britain's National Gallery of Modern Art, it

1 *Duveen: A Life in Art*, by Meryle Secrest; Knopf, 560 pages, $35.

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was Duveen who made it possible. And posterity has lived up to his pioneering example.

At the age of sixteen he entered his father's firm (Duveen Brothers, Art Dealers), where he made a great fortune and never put a foot wrong. (He learned, among much else, that there were clients who would rather pay too much, and go away feeling important, than go home with a bargain.)

In later life, his aim was always to give as much as to take. He gave important paintings to both the National Gallery and the Tate, as well as to provincial museums. And when he was thirty-seven, he began to employ Bernard Berenson as his chief art advisor. For the next thirty-three years, he and "B. B." (singly or jointly) were never out of the news. B. B. got a salary of £50,000 a year—no small sum at the time—and was worth every penny of it.

As the reigning expert on Italian Old Master paintings, Berenson had a worldwide market for his opinions. He was also sought out by younger art historians, who prized his delicious company. Both he and they were the better for it (and often the richer, too). Not to have known "B. B." in his later years was to have missed a unique opportunity, in that for more than fifty years in Settignano he had known "everyone" and remembered everything. Major thinkers and major doers often come to mind in that context, as do persons of high degree or current celebrity.

But B. B. was just as delighted to talk about minor country families in England. He was the best imaginable audience for an amusing story or an intelligent comment on a current controversy. He loved to get letters, and unless they bored him he replied by return mail. And he was looked after ideally well by Nicky Mariano, an entirely presentable friend, employee, and sometime mistress who saw to it that he was never pestered by people whom he would not like.

Mariano rightly regarded herself as a person of consequence. "What do you think of me?" she asked, when she first drove me to Settignano. "Am I what you expected?"

I could have told her later she was more fun than B. B. himself, who spent much of our lunch party in discussing the dogs and the servants of an English family in one of the drearier suburbs of London. He had written to me that it would delight him to hear me talk, but the opportunity did not occur and I never saw him again, though I kept his letters.

When Joseph Duveen entered his father's firm, Duveen Brothers, in London, in 1886, Thomas Agnew and Sons were the senior dealers of paintings. Then as now, the Agnews were, as Meryle Secrest puts it, "gentlemen with gentlemanly lives." "Duveen," in her view, "was always ahead because he had no other life." Ms. Secrest writes with the perspective of one who has written books on both Berenson and Kenneth Clark. But Clark, Berenson, and Duveen were masters of self-presentation who kept their thoughts, and their secrets, intact.

Duveen in his last years is beautifully evoked in this book. We hear of him, for instance, at a dinner party in London in the summer of 1938. The talk was all about cricket, and Duveen (then almost seventy) might have fallen silent, waiting for the life-members of Lord's to have their say. But Duveen took over. Was not Jack Hobbs, an old personal friend of his, the greatest batsman who ever lived? As to that, according to Richard Kingzett, later to be a partner in Thomas Agnew's, Duveen put his case "with the greatest élan, vitality and self-assurance. The party simply revolved around him and you didn't notice anyone else."

In no matter what company, Duveen had that effect. But if he scented big business, he would drop everything at any time and go anywhere. He lived at a time when British portrait painting was in very high favor with American collectors. He also had an infallible sense of occasion. When he bought Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" in 1921 for H. E. Huntington he took it to his ailing mother in London so that she could see "the most beautiful picture in the world." (Even to get it safely to California was regarded as almost a miracle.)

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The "Blue Boy" had been green (in color) when Duveen bought it, but after its restoration it attracted 90,000 visitors to the National Gallery, where it was on temporary loan, and street sellers offered rudimentary reproductions to those who were queueing outside to see it.

When it was shipped to New York—the Huntingtons had bought it—it traveled in a steel box which was enclosed in a weatherproof iron-bound box. Sir Joseph Duveen himself was on the train that carried it to Los Angeles. Thanks to the attendant publicity, Duveen was beyond question what he had always wanted to be—the most famous art-dealer in the world.

We live at a time in which record auction prices are the equivalent of football results for an uninformed public. Whether the painting in question is great or merely very good, of eternal interest or simply in high fashion, is neither here nor there. It can come from anywhere, and from any period, and take its chance.

Duveen belonged to an earlier age. He knew his collectors, and he encouraged them not so much to enlarge their likings as to stick with them and to count on him to get the very best examples. When they had already got them, as was the case with the British Museum and the Elgin Marbles, Duveen would still have liked to make an appearance. A great poet, John Keats, had felt "a most dizzy pain" on first seeing the Elgin Marbles, and he gave a sublime expression to his feelings.

One of the paintings which arouses in us "a most dizzy pain" when we first see it is Giorgione's "Nativity." When it was included in this year's Giorgione exhibition in Vienna, and later in Venice, it made an unforgettable impression. Never before had that specific vision had such a hold upon us. We were not, of course, the first to have been aware of it, but we felt that this painting had kept something of itself for us alone.

That was an illusion. But it remains true that a great painting reveals itself in different ways to every one of us. There is no end to it, any more than there need be an end to ourselves while we are still around. In that respect, art is even more generous than life itself.

Duveen worked on the principle that everyone had the right to see everything. He also thought that, within reason, everything should be brought to them, or at any rate be within their reach at one time or another. When the great pioneer exhibition of Italian painting was on its way from Italy to London, by sea, in 1937, informed observers trembled to think how much might be lost on a single shipload to London.

Such fears have since been abandoned. Air travel ranks higher, until the next crash, than the sea-ship and the overcrowded highways. And the demand is ever more imperious. "We want the best, here and now!" the public says. Private, civic, and governmental prestige and profit also play a part. In that context, great art is way up there with the Vienna Opera, the Bolshoi Ballet, and the Comédie Française.

A key event in this context was the arrival in the British Museum of the Elgin Marbles. These were brought to London from Athens in 1806 by Thomas Bruce, the seventh Earl of Elgin, and sold to the British government in 1816. The gallery in which they now appear was paid for by Duveen. To the extent that more visitors now ask for the Elgin Marbles than for anything else in the British Museum, they can be regarded as Duveen's greatest monument.

Theory of everything

Roger Penrose
The Road to Reality:
A Complete Guide
to the Laws of the Universe.
Jonathan Cape, 1094 pages, £30

reviewed by Martin Gardner

The mathematical physicist and cosmologist Roger Penrose, now professor emeritus at Oxford University, is best known to mathematicians for his discovery of Penrose tiles.

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These are two four-sided polygons that tile the plane only in a nonperiodic way, that is, without a fundamental region that repeats periodically like the hexagonal tiling of a bathroom floor, or the amazing tesselations of the Dutch artist M. C. Escher. To everyone's surprise, including Penrose's, his whimsical tiling turned out to underlie a previously unknown type of crystal. You can read all about this in my book *Penrose Tiles to Trapdoor Ciphers*.

Penrose's two best sellers, *The Emperor's New Mind* and its sequel, *Shadows of the Mind*, were slashing attacks on the opinions of a few artificial intelligence mavens that in just a few decades computers made with wires and switches will be able to do everything a human mind can do. Advanced computers, it was said, will some day replace the human race and colonize the cosmos! Penrose disagrees. Not until we know more about laws below the level of quantum mechanics, he argues, can computers cross that mysterious threshold separating our self-awareness from the unconscious networks of computers. Maybe the threshold will never be crossed. Computers of the sort we know how to build obviously are no more aware of what they do than a typewriter knows it is typing.

Penrose's new book, *The Road to Reality*, is a monumental work of more than a thousand pages. Not since the publication of the redbound volumes of Richard Feynman's *Lectures on Physics* has anyone covered in such awesome detail the struggles of today's physicists to unravel the fundamental laws of our fantastic universe—to find the Holy Grail that has been called a TOE, or Theory of Everything.

Most of Penrose's masterpiece, on which he labored for eight years, is on a technical level far beyond the reach of readers unable, as Penrose warns, to handle simple fractions. The book's first half is a masterful survey of the mathematics essential for comprehending modern physics. Chapters cover hyperbolic geometry (illustrated with Escher's models of the hyperbolic plane), complex numbers (so essential in quantum mechanics), Riemann surfaces, quaternions, n-dimensional manifolds, fibre bundles, Fourier analysis, Gödel's theorem, Minkowski space, Lagrangians, Hamiltonians, and other terrifying topics. Later chapters are crisp introductions to relativity, quantum theory, the Big Bang, black holes, time travel, and many other areas of active research. I will skip over these densely packed chapters to focus on a few aspects of Penrose's book that can be at least partly understood without mathematical fluency.

Penrose opens his mammoth treatise with a vigorous defense of Platonic realism. This is the view of almost all mathematicians and physicists. They take for granted that the objects and theorems of mathematics are timeless truths that have a strange existence independent of human minds and cultures. There is no galaxy in which two plus two is not four.

Penrose calls attention to an intricate pattern known as the Mandelbrot set. Generated on computer screens by an absurdly simple formula, this swirling pattern is so complex that successive magnifications of its parts always disclose totally unexpected properties. It is impossible, Penrose insists, to regard this mysterious pattern as something cobbled up by our minds. It existed timelessly as an abstract object, "out there," before Benoît Mandelbrot discovered it. Perhaps it exists on extraterrestrial computer printouts, perhaps in the Mind of God. Exploring it is like exploring a vast jungle.

After his sweeping survey of mathematics, Penrose takes on the daunting task of explaining quantum theory, with emphasis on its bewildering paradoxes. Consider, for example, the mind-boggling EPR paradox. Its letters are the initials of Einstein and two associates who wrote a famous paper in which they maintained that their thought experiment proves that quantum mechanics is incomplete, a view shared by Penrose.

In its simplest form, the EPR paradox imagines a quantum reaction that sends two identical particles, A and B, flying apart in

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opposite directions. Particle A is measured to determine if its spin is right- or left-handed. In quantum theory a particle does not have a definite spin until it is measured. Its wave function is then said to "collapse," and it acquires at random, like the heads and tails of a flipped coin, a precise handedness. Amazingly, particle B, which may be light years from A, instantly undergoes a similar wave collapse that gives it a spin opposite the spin of A. (The conservation of momentum requires that A and B have opposite spins.) Now according to relativity theory no information can travel faster than light. How then does B instantly "know" the outcome of a measurement of A?

The paradox is not resolved by saying that A and B are "entangled" in a single system with a single wave function. The problem is to explain how the two particles manage to stay connected. Einstein called it a "spooky action at a distance." The EPR is only the most dramatic of many paradoxes of entanglement that have now been confirmed in laboratories. Like Einstein, Penrose believes that such paradoxes will not be resolved until quantum mechanics is found resting on a deeper theory.

Penrose is frank in admitting that he has "prejudices" which other physicists reject. For another instance, he is not impressed by the "many-worlds interpretation" of quantum phenomena. According to this eccentric view, every time a quantum event takes place the entire universe splits into two or more parallel universes, each containing a possible outcome of the event!

Take the notorious case known as "Schrödinger's cat." Imagine a cat inside a closed box along with a Geiger counter that emits random clicks. The first click triggers a device that kills the cat. Some quantum experts, notably Eugene Wigner, believed that no quantum event is real until it is observed by a conscious mind. Until someone opens the box and looks, the poor cat is a "superposition" of two quantum states, dead and alive. In the many-worlds interpretation the cat remains alive in one world, dies in the other. This proliferation of new universes, like the forking branches of a rapidly growing tree, naturally must include duplicates of you and me!

If these billions upon billions of sprouting universes are not "real" in the same way our universe is real, but only imaginary artifacts, then the many-worlds interpretation is just another way of talking about quantum events. Yes, the talk erases some of the bizarre concepts of quantum theory, but with such an enormous violation of Occam's razor.

Quantum teleportation is another wild field of active research. Is it possible to scan an object, say an apple, and transmit to another spot its atomic structure? Will it be possible some day to teleport humans, the way they are beamed down to a planet from Star Trek's spaceship? Penrose shows that such teleportations are not possible unless the original object is totally destroyed. If a person is teleported, will he be the *same* person after he is reconstructed? Or only a detailed copy that is a different person? Here we plunge into profound questions about human identity—questions that long bemused science-fiction writers, as well as philosophers going back to John Locke and earlier.

Superstrings were believed to be inconceivably minute loops the vibrations of which generated all the basic particles. In recent years superstring theory has been absorbed into a broader conjecture called membrane theory or M-theory. Although Penrose admires M-theory's mathematical elegance, he suspects it has little relevance to the actual world. So far no way has been found to test it. Will it lead to the next great revolution in physics, as its enthusiasts hope, or will it prove to be a fad destined to go nowhere? Penrose cites numerous past conjectures that proponents thought much too beautiful not to be true, but which soon bit the dust.

The chief rival to M-theory, albeit having fewer disciples, is twistor theory. It was invented by Penrose who, along with his colleagues, has for decades been elaborating

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the theory. Twistors, deriving from what are known as spinors, are abstract entities which may provide the structure of spacetime. They have a permanent "chirality" (handedness). Penrose is rare among physicists in believing that the universe is fundamentally asymmetric with respect to time and chirality. There have been feeble efforts to combine parts of twistor theory and M-theory, but as things now stand, Penrose finds the two conjectures incompatible. If one is true, the other is false.

This review has given only a few fleeting glimpses into the rich abundance of Penrose's book. Not only is it admirably written, but it is also cleverly illustrated by Penrose himself. Preceding each exercise is one of three tiny icons. A smiling face tells you that the exercise is "very straightforward." A solemn faces means "needs a bit of thought." And a frowning face suggests "not to be taken seriously." One drawing, which Penrose repeats twice with subtle variations, shows three spheres at the corners of a triangle. Each represents a "form of existence." One form is the Platonic realm of mathematics. Another is the physical world, and the third is the mental world. Tiny arrows show how the three worlds are clockwise connected.

The Road to Reality loops through a luxurious landscape suffused with the beauty, magic, and mystery of Being. "Why," Penrose's friend Stephen Hawking recently asked, "does the universe go to all the bother of existing?" To an atheist, G. K. Chesterton somewhere remarked, the universe is the most exquisite mechanism ever constructed by nobody.

For Penrose, science is a neverending effort to penetrate the secrets of what Einstein liked to call the Old One. He has no sympathy for those who think that all underlying principles of physics have now, or soon will be, discovered. (See John Horgan's book *The End of Science*.) For all we know, the universe may have infinite levels of sub-basements and infinite levels of attics in the opposite direction.

Penrose opens and closes his book with two lovely parables about how intuitive insights can ignite scientific revolutions. His prologue is a tribute to Pythagoras for his discovery of irrationals, and the essential role of numbers in understanding how the Old One behaves. His postscript tells of Alícia, a postdoctoral student of physics at the Albert Einstein Institute in Golm, Germany. Alícia had been struggling with difficulties involving quantum gravity, black holes, and the monstrous explosion that created the universe. She had stayed up all night gazing at the stars through a large window. As dawn was about to break, she observed for the first time a rare event known as the green flash. "This experience mingled with some puzzling mathematics thoughts that had been troubling her throughout the night."

The parable's final sentence: "Then an odd thought overtook her . . ."

The usual suspects

S. J. Hamrick
Deceiving the Deceivers:
Kim Philby, Donald Maclean,
and Guy Burgess.
Yale University Press, 320 pages, $29.95

Rufina Philby
The Private Life of Kim Philby.
St. Ermin's Press, 449 pages, $14.95

reviewed by David Pryce-Jones

The Soviet Union is no more, and to a whole new generation it already seems unreal, preposterous, some sort of practical joke that the Russians played on themselves and the rest of the world. It didn't come off, did it, so it could never have come off, right? That was not how it appeared when Stalin was conquering and killing at will, or when Nikita Khrushchev was promising to bury the West. In general terms, the statesmen of the West, their advisors and their military, analyzed and countered the Soviet threat

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realistically, as in the 1948 Berlin air lift or the Cuban missile crisis, finally encouraging Mikhail Gorbachev to bring about the Soviet Union's peaceful auto-destruction, as strange an event as any in history.

Public opinion was something else. Here mixed motives were in play. In the face of Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles and battle fleets, of existential danger in short, millions of people proclaimed that they would rather be red than dead. That putative nuclear mushroom cloud dominated their imagination, and their sincerity smelled of fear. Some others, mostly but not exclusively intellectuals, were convinced that Communism was the path to utopia.

Three such in Britain were Kim Philby, Donald Maclean, and Guy Burgess. Convinced Communists since their student days at Cambridge university, they were linked together in a network spying on their own country and betraying it in favor of Stalin's Soviet Union. Well-connected, and educated in the best schools, they were able to take privilege for granted. Burgess and Maclean were thought in chic social circles to be amusingly louche, and many witnesses attest to Philby's charm, and the stutter that went with it. All three rose to positions either in the British Secret Service or the Foreign Office with access to information valuable to the Soviet Union. In a position to know the facts about Stalinist terror and Gulag, they nonetheless made themselves willing accomplices in Communist crime. The charming Philby had much blood on his hands. He informed the Soviets of an impending high-level defector in Istanbul, and they caught the man and shot him. He gave away clandestine Allied operations in Albania, the Baltic, and Ukraine, leading to the deaths of scores of patriots and agents. Somewhere in the psychological depths where each of these traitors had to answer to himself, deception and self-deception were bewilderingly entangled.

Malcolm Muggeridge was someone who might have taken that same confused path, but the experience of being a newspaper correspondent in Moscow in the 1930s instead cured him of his youthful Communism. Service as an intelligence officer in the war heightened a conviction that the only valid response to mankind's folly was satire. He liked to maintain that espionage is pointless, and spies and traitors achieve nothing. Burgess and Maclean proved him wrong when they disappeared in May 1951, only to turn up later in Moscow. The scandal was immense. Communists had evidently penetrated and undermined the establishment. Senator McCarthy might not have had very nice manners, but evidently there were reds not just under the bed but everywhere in the room. The defection of Burgess and Maclean forced the British to realize that they might have won the world war but looked like losing the peace. Cosy old assumptions of superiority were out of date.

Twelve years of demoralization and precipitous decline in international standing followed, and then in 1963 Philby defected too. Labelled the Third Man, he had evidently been collaborating with Burgess and Maclean, and perhaps others as well. Furtively fired as early as 1955 from MI6, the British equivalent of the CIA, Philby had been exonerated by Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in the House of Commons. His secret-service friends and protectors found a job for him as a foreign correspondent in Beirut. Eventually a British agent confronted him there with the evidence of his treason. Had he betrayed the Soviets, they would have shot him out of hand. British gentlemanly manners suggested that the authorities had long known the truth about his part in the Burgess and Maclean fiasco but covered up, even encouraging him to slip unpunished out of sight. The British now finally lost confidence in themselves and those who represented them. Muggeridge in his ribald brilliance overlooked how traitors of this spectacular kind could push public opinion into thinking that the Soviets were always a step or two ahead, likely to win the Cold War, and therefore to be flattered and appeased. Mrs. Thatcher's

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achievement in her years as prime minister was to reverse what had come to look like ingrained national defeatism.

Of the making of books about these traitors there is no end. They have acquired a peculiar celebrity status, with a rancid glamour all their own. Rufina Philby's memoir was first published five years ago, and already then it contained an annex compiled by Hayden Peake—seemingly himself a one-time intelligence officer—listing no fewer than 157 relevant books, with short sharp commentaries on their reliability or otherwise. Grown larger since then, this mass of material is a sub-branch of detective fiction, with every minute detail the subject of speculation, leading to thesis and antithesis and synthesis, the contradictions and refutations argued densely back and forth in a tone of scholiastic knowingness, so that the general reader twists and turns as in a maze without exit. According to some interpretations, Philby was really damaging, while Maclean and Burgess had little to impart, yet according to others Maclean and Burgess passed on vital secrets from their work in the British embassy in Washington, while Philby was mostly ineffectual. Needless to say, the authorities reveal their side of the story only through selective snippets, and probably never will release the full facts.

During the war, counter-intelligence officers and cryptanalysts were deciphering German radio traffic in a program with the code-name Ultra, and under the inexorable approach of the Cold War they switched to deciphering Soviet radio traffic in a successor program called Venona. In the last few years, the Venona texts have been published, greatly adding to the Philby, Maclean, and Burgess bibliography. This is where S. J. Hamrick comes in. A former CIA officer, he adopts quite naturally the dense argumentative style of this sub-branch of detective literature. Quick to suspect, he pounces on small discrepancies and turns them into accusations and then full-blown theories. So apparently trivial details suddenly take on a life of their own, and the reader is invited to emerge from the maze in the dazzle of a magnificent conspiracy.

The Venona texts were deciphered by different teams on either side of the Atlantic. Their publication is incomplete. Why not bring together for comparison the partially transcribed Venona texts sent by Maclean and the original documents presumably stored in the archives ever since he stole them? Because the British have something to hide. They were, and are, masters of deception, and nobody deceived better than Sir Dick White, head of counter-intelligence in this crucial Cold War period. The official version is that Burgess and Maclean were discovered only in 1951 when they defected to Moscow. Philby was implicated but only by association, and when he denied treason, proof could not be brought. Not a bit of it, according to Hamrick. Clever Dick White and other senior colleagues had rumbled Maclean in 1949 or even earlier, but let him run in the hope that in due course he would lead to others, and they could round up his entire network. Exposure of treason in high places, they also feared, would put an end to collaboration with the United States in building the British atom bomb. Deliberately and ingeniously they sent Maclean to Washington and fed him with disinformation to serve up to the KGB. The same with Philby. In Hamrick's view, Philby's reputation has been grotesquely overblown. The fellow was "a pathetic weakling craving popular recognition," utterly incapable of realizing that the British were using him for their own ends. An American General by the name of Edwin L. Sibert once let this cat out of the bag to a journalist, and that's substantiation enough for Hamrick.

After decades of breast-beating and guilt, it is of course gratifying to think that British counter-intelligence could after all turn the tricks of the KGB around, and defeat it. Much suspension of disbelief is required, however, to accept that White and his col-

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leagues had the initiative and then the capacity to deceive their own government and their American colleagues. Would they really have risked the dramatic political consequences of being caught out? And another thing: Maclean's Venona texts cover important issues such as Churchill's plea to Roosevelt to stand up to Stalin on the Polish question. Ah, easy, says Hamrick, the British had to give something away in order to boost Maclean's standing as an agent.

A KGB staffer by the name of Yelena Modrzhinskaya early on had doubts about the reliability of the British traitors. It was all too good to be true. Surely they were double agents, or provocateurs, one of the more dire accusations in the Soviet vocabulary. A wary KGB accordingly saw to the daily requirements of the defectors once they were in Moscow but kept them at arm's length. With their upper-class assumptions and connections, the three seem never quite to have believed that they would have to pay for what they had done, and fantasized that one day they might return to Britain. Burgess needed alcohol and rough trade. Maclean, a chronic alcoholic, was unbalanced to the point of derangement. Arriving in Moscow, Philby had a five-year affair with Maclean's wife, and after she left him he too became an alcoholic and attempted suicide. These rather comparable collapses of personality put the KGB on the spot, and one may wonder whether Modrzhinskaya was promoted for her caution.

Philby met Rufina towards the end of 1970 just after he had tried to kill himself, and he appears to have latched on to her despairingly as the only alternative to death. Much younger than he, pretty and intelligent, she was an editor in a prestigious institute, and therefore a member of the Moscow nomenklatura. For the eighteen years of their marriage, she kept a home for Philby. Their happiest times seem to have been in Black Sea clinics where the Soviet elite used to go for health and recreation, or on trips somewhere in the Soviet bloc, notably Bulgaria. "The evening of my life is golden," Philby apparently said to her one day, and she quotes him with much satisfaction.

No doubt that was the picture the KGB wanted her to paint. Philby could do more for them as an embellished legend than he had ever done in reality. Under the external blitheness of Rufina's memoir is the internal evidence of a wreck of a man, Hamrick's "pathetic weakling" indeed, so childishly dependent on her that he was always unwilling to let the poor woman out of his sight. Her presence was necessary to fill his loneliness and control his drinking. She stood between him and the harsh Soviet daily grind. Together they went everywhere, to the food shops, and to the post office to pick up the permitted foreign newspapers and mail. A KGB case officer watched over their every movement. Wherever they journeyed in the Soviet bloc, the KGB provided official car tours and celebrations which in fact meant non-stop surveillance.

Worse, Modrzhinskaya had won. Philby was given no real work, the KGB had no use for him. Once, and only once, and as late as 1977, he was allowed to lecture a KGB audience, telling them that he became a Communist out of a strong emotional committment to the poor and weak and underprivileged. In his own memoirs, *My Silent War*, published in English in 1968, Philby contradictorily asserted that he had accepted the Soviet invitation to become their spy out of a lust for power : "One does not look twice at an offer of enrolment in an elite force." It is a measure of KGB distrust that the Russian version of this book was not published till 1980.

Graham Greene had known Philby since wartime days when he too had worked in intelligence, and he wrote the introduction to *My Silent War*, justifying and praising the man and the book, in what now reads like a period curiosity of an extreme kind. Whether out of mischief or conceit, or some literary impulse (with the very remote possibility that he was once more reporting to MI6), Greene had long been cultivating the pose of an independent spirit by prefer-

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ring everything pro-Soviet to anything pro-American, turning himself into one of the more reliable fellow-travellers of his generation. What he shared with Philby was the sense that self-importance counted for more than anything so mundane as loyalty. That was the basis of the fiction which had made his reputation. Greene took pains to visit Philby in Moscow, and Rufina is naively proud that Philby so greatly wanted Greene's approval and so smoothly won it. Photographs show Philby and Greene grinning side by side, two of a kind, in the company of the perpetual KGB minder. For Philby in his insecurity, here was absolution from a famous writer, in the hope that disloyalty really was a virtue. The motives of his behavior seem lost in some part of himself which he could not reach, never mind analyze. A few more years were to pass, and the convictions and activities of all these people became academic, adding up to nothing, a facet of the century's cruel practical joke. Malcolm Muggeridge after all has the last laugh.

Rock rage

Nicola Shulman
A Rage for Rock Gardening:
The story of Reginald Farrer.
Beacon Press, 209 pages, $23

reviewed by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

Reviewers of books do not normally begin by praising the publisher, but in this case David R. Godine's commitment to bringing out a line of garden books no longer in print and new volumes about the near-forgotten greats of garden writing should be applauded. Serious garden *literature* occupies that small corner of the bookshelf not taken up by practical books on gardening, which have in recent years enjoyed a market boom analogous to that of cookbooks. Godine's list is aimed at the reader who is interested in the lives and works of gardeners and garden writers of the past, particularly those of an original bent and lively prose style. Books by and about them are engaging to read, whether or not one is oneself a gardener.

This publisher's latest offering, Nicola Shulman's *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, is a short and fascinating biography of Reginald Farrer, a near-forgotten gardener, writer, and plant collector who transformed the alpine garden from Victorian trophy status to something akin to Gertrude Jekyll's simple yet sophisticated version of the English cottage garden. In Farrer's case, the objective was not garden design as a seemingly artless art form but rather the selection and cultivation of alpine plants in a naturalistic manner.

This was not easy. It demanded a keen knowledge and ability to reproduce to the extent possible the conditions of these delicate, finicky plants' original mountain habitat, something the talented amateur botanist Farrer was singularly well equipped to do. His family's estate, Ingleborough in north Yorkshire, boasted a limestone cliff overlooking a lake, a fissured karst formation with underground streams and caverns. It offered as close an approximation as any geologic situation in England of conditions conducive for growing alpine plants. From childhood, when he had precociously mastered a great deal of botanical science, this was his laboratory.

But science was for Farrer a means not an end. Like his relative George Sitwell, the author of *On the Making of Gardens* (recently republished by Godine), he was an Edwardian aesthete. With no small degree of snobbery, he praised the beauty of certain plants with unabashed ardor. This style of garden writing, at once discriminating and romantic, had a powerful influence on Farrer's contemporaries and followers in this literary genre, and to prove the point Shulman provides a brief selection of their writings in an appendix. According to her, "Up until now, serious garden writers delivered their advice in tones of omniscient authority, remote and unassailable. Farrer wrote as a personality, full of prejudice and indefensible opinions."

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His literary voice, at once confident and confidential, is lushly vivid in its descriptive powers. For instance, a wild Mouton tree peony "carried at the top, elegantly balancing, that single enormous blossom, waved and crimped into the boldest grace of line, of absolutely pure white, with featherings of deepest maroon radiating at the base of the petals from the boss of golden fluff at the flower's heart." This observation was made from his vantage point on a hillside in Kandu Province in northwestern China.

The son of a remote and overbearing father who kept him on a tight financial leash, Farrer was short, disfigured by a harelip, and vocally handicapped by a cleft palate. An acolyte of Jane Austen (he carried a complete set of her novels on his expeditions into the Himalayas), he was a failed novelist whose plots revolved around thinly disguised hostility toward his family. If the Englishmen of Farrer's generation did not seek distinction in Parliament or the diplomatic corps, as had their Victorian ancestors, they nevertheless sought it in artistic accomplishment and in bold adventure. No one was more fiercely competitive in this regard than Farrer, who was determined to distinguish himself both as a writer and an intrepid collector of alpine plants.

Even though his purse was constrained by paternal oversight and he was unable to get official or commercial support, he nevertheless managed to finance his Himalayan plant-collecting expeditions. For these he needed a botanically knowledgeable, diplomatic, underpaid colleague who could manage travel logistics in dangerous parts and native workers who could collect seeds and dig plants, which he could then press, mount, and label on sheets to be later placed in herbaria for scientific study. Thus equipped, and in spite of his characteristic egoism, unfeeling regard for others, and whiskey-fueled bullying abusiveness, which prompted laborers to quit and even the most tolerant and submissive assistant to lose enthusiasm for the project, he pursued his passion with reckless skill and obsessive persistence.

Shulman's perceptive view of the character and psychology of her subject, whose one great (unrequited) love, besides his plants, was his Balliol classmate Aubrey Herbert, makes Farrer's story poignant as well as interesting. It is fascinating, too, because it gives us a window on one of the most interesting chapters in garden history: that of the intrepid explorers, most of whom, unlike Farrer, were financed by such important botanical gardens as Kew and Edinburgh as well as by the increasingly lucrative nursery trade as they set out to discover and harvest the seeds of plant species yet unknown to domestic horticulture. Farrer's fellow collectors were a rivalrous lot, and they jealously demarcated territories within the dangerous remote places where they plant-hunted. Because he was smart and tough enough to find his own ground and skillfully play their game, several kinds of choice alpine plants found in rock gardens today bear the Latin species designation *farreri*.

In *A Rage for Rock Gardening*, Shulman puts Farrer's achievement into historical perspective. The generation of Oxford graduates to which he belonged was poised between the high noon of Empire, the optimistic Victorian age of civic endeavor and political service, and the disillusioning nightmare of World War I. With a classical education, these scions of rich families in a still wealthy imperial nation sought their mark in the world in less obvious ways than their forebears. Farrer made his not in his spate of novels but in *My Rock Garden* (1907), *Alpines and Bog-Plants* (1908), *In a Yorkshire Garden* (1909), *Among the Hills: A Book of Joy in High Places* (1911), *The Rock Garden* (1912), *On the Eaves of the World: A Botanical Exploration of the Borders of China and Tibet* (1917), and his magisterial, encyclopedic, two-volume work, *The English Rock Garden* (1919). In spite of his congenital rage and outrageous behavior, this remarkable Edwardian, who died in 1920 at the age of forty in a tiny station called Nyitadi east of the Irrawaddy River in Burma, was the single individual who, more than any other, through his prolific writings

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created the rage that resulted in the innumerable rock gardens and backyard rockeries that we see today.

The world's first story

Derrek Hines, translator
Gilgamesh.
Anchor Books, 66 pages, $9.95

Stephen Mitchell, translator
Gilgamesh: A New English Version.
The Free Press, 290 pages, $24.00

reviewed by John J. Miller

About a century and a half ago, the name "Gilgamesh" meant nothing to the ordinary person—or even to the ordinary educated person. It was simply unknown. In the 1840s, however, an Englishman whose head was filled with exotic visions from *A Thousand and One Nights* began excavating at an archaeological site in what is now Iraq. Austen Henry Layard unearthed a trove of clay tablets full of strange wedge-shaped markings. He understood this to be a form of ancient writing and shipped thousands of the tablets to the British Museum, where Henry Rawlinson struggled to decipher them. Rawlinson's breakthrough arrived in the 1860s, when he became the first man in several millennia to comprehend cuneiform. A few years later, one of his assistants, an earnest young fellow named George Smith, studied a few neglected tablets. What he read on them electrified the world.

At a meeting of the Society of Biblical Archaeology in 1872, Smith recounted the story of a long-forgotten king who was ordered by the gods to build a great ship, load it with animals, and batten down the hatches for a deluge lasting six days and seven nights. Sound familiar? Here was the story of the Flood, told on a tablet older than the Old Testament. The Noah figure even sends forth a series of birds from his ark to search for dry land. It is hard to believe the two stories are not connected.

Yet Smith's rendition of the Flood was maddeningly incomplete. "I must notice that in various places the tablets are broken and the texts defective," he explained in his lecture. They were full enough, however, to generate an enormous amount of excitement in the public. Within a few weeks, the *Daily Telegraph* offered 1,000 guineas to anyone who could locate the missing portions of the text. Smith himself accepted the challenge, journeyed to Iraq, and began digging. Fortune—or one might say providence—smiled upon him. Whereas some men have wasted whole lives searching for El Dorado or the Holy Grail, Smith found what he was looking for in a few days. And what he turned up was the Epic of Gilgamesh.

Since then, *Gilgamesh* has entered the record books as the world's first known example of true literature. For most people, it remains little more than the answer to a trivia question. Maybe they once had a professor of classics who casually remarked at the beginning of the semester that something predates the *Iliad*. A smaller number perhaps have been made to read *Gilgamesh* in a college survey course. The original contains just enough sexually explicit material to keep it off most high school reading lists—though sanitized versions are readily available for kids, including a trilogy of attractive picture books by Ludmilla Zeman and a single volume for a slightly older set by Geraldine McCaughrean. Despite these impediments, a number of readers have found the experience of reading the long-lost epic revelatory. "Gilgamesh is overwhelming," wrote Rainer Maria Rilke, "and I consider it the greatest thing one can experience."

Today, the Gilgamesh poem is perhaps seven-tenths complete and spread across twelve cuneiform tablets, which are preserved in various conditions. The portion describing the Flood—the object of so much early attention—is almost entirely readable. But large chunks of other parts are either gone forever or remain buried in the sands of Iraq, awaiting their own George Smith.

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We do know quite a bit more about the epic today than Smith did in his time. There seems to have been a real king named Gilgamesh who ruled between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers more than 4,000 years ago. Following his death, he became a Hercules-like figure in Sumerian folklore and the subject of several heroic poems. Within a few centuries, these were combined to form a single tale. Roughly 3,000 years ago, a Babylonian scribe named Sin-leqi-unninni revised the poem into a standard version that forms the basis of most modern translations. This critical text owes its survival to Assurbanipal, an Assyrian king who ruled in the seventh century B.C. He had not only the imperial ambition to conquer his neighbors but also the intellectual curiosity to collect their writings in a great library at Nineveh. New fragments surface every so often, and each one holds the potential to cast new light on the bygone epic.

What makes the poem interesting is the character of Gilgamesh. He is not merely a hero, but a tragic hero who refuses to accept his own mortality. No plot summary can do the poem justice, but in essence Gilgamesh befriends a rival, Enkidu, and the two companions embark on a quest to slay the forest monster Humbaba. They accomplish this feat, but at the cost of angering a god who demands Enkidu's life. After Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh falls into a fit of despair and sets out on another adventure to learn how he might escape death and live forever. He ultimately encounters Utnapishtim, the Noah figure who tells the story of the Flood and informs Gilgamesh that mortals must perish. Gilgamesh is not pleased at this news, but he seems to accept it as he returns to his city. As a piece of literature, Gilgamesh is the compelling effort of an early civilization to grapple with fundamental questions of the human condition. It speaks to all of us, even now.

A handful of very good versions of the story are available, and in several forms. These include a prose adaptation by N. K. Sandars, a free verse interpretation by Herbert Mason, and an iambic pentameter poem by David Ferry. None is a strict translation, because there can be no such thing. The original language is simply too alien and, more importantly, the text is damaged or missing in too many places to permit a seamless narrative. An almost word-for-word rendering by John Gardner and John Maier is full of brackets and ellipses; many passages are barely coherent. Complicating matters further, the universe of scholars who can actually read cuneiform is extremely small. The website for the International Congress of Assyriology and Near Eastern Archaeology lists only a few hundred members—and the number of these members who can transform the original into serviceable English, to say nothing of poetic English, is smaller still. That's why most of the successful translators (including each of those mentioned above) can't even read the original tablets at all. Their acknowledgments always confess deep debts to the philologists who can.

Derrek Hines, a Canadian poet now living in Cornwall, continues this practice in his new edition of *Gilgamesh*, which he insists is "an interpretation" and "in no sense a translation." This admission is perhaps the only way in which his free-verse poem is conventional. By its third line, which describes the hero's "zeppelin ego," readers who know that Gilgamesh never laid eyes on a zeppelin realize they're in for a jarring experience. The language is always evocative, often vulgar, and cluttered with deliberate anachronisms. Every now and then, a phrase really works: Hines describes the wrathful goddess Ishtar raising Gilgamesh "on the meat hook of her ire." Perhaps the Sumerians did not have meat hooks—I have no idea—but it's a powerful image that succinctly captures the ancient Mesopotamian view of how the fickle deities viewed humans who irritated them. It is not, to say the least, a Judeo-Christian perspective. Even the zeppelin reference is perhaps defensible: Gilgamesh does in fact possess a zeppelin-sized ego, and by the end of the tale it's going to suffer a zeppelin-like catastrophe.

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The clever use of anachronisms can even suggest timelessness—a work of art that speaks to the ages, such as a performance of Shakespeare in which Hamlet wears a suit rather than a codpiece. Hines, however, seems to deploy anachronisms simply for the sake of deploying them: he refers to the Empire State Building, Swiss bank accounts, paparazzi, the Rubik's Cube, and *The Wizard of Oz*. The result is perhaps the weirdest version of *Gilgamesh* now on the shelf—and a deeply unsatisfying one not only for its bizarre allusions but also for its other editorial decisions, such as omitting the story of the Flood.

The original Gilgamesh tablets create both problems and opportunities for Hines and his fellow interpreters: Problems because important sections are damaged and therefore missing, and opportunities because these gaps grant artistic license. In another new version—"a loose, noniambic, nonalliterative tetrameter" (as used in Eliot's *Four Quartets*)—Stephen Mitchell turns Shiduri, a female tavern keeper, into a moral centerpiece of the poem. This choice is less bold than it may seem on first glance. Rather than inventing her speech on human mortality, he restores it from a version of the poem that is more ancient than Sin-leqi-unninni, who either cut Shiduri's remarks or didn't have access to the same sources as today's scholars. Mitchell is not the first to resurrect them. Mason, for instance, grants Shiduri a few extra lines:

> The gods gave death to man and kept life for
> Themselves. That is the only way it is.
> Cherish your rests; the children you might
> have;
> You are a thing that carries so much tiredness.

Mitchell expands the speech, and by doing so calls additional attention to it. His Shiduri is perhaps guilty of uttering platitudes worthy of Polonius, but her words overflow with the common sense that Gilgamesh so desperately needs to acquire:

> Humans are born, they live, then they die,
> this is the order that the gods have decreed.
> But until the end comes, enjoy your life,
> spend it in happiness, not despair.
> Savor your food, make each of your days
> a delight, bathe and anoint yourself,
> wear bright clothes that are sparkling clean,
> let music and dancing fill your house,
> love the child who holds you by the hand,
> and give your wife pleasure in your embrace.
> That is the best way for a man to live.

This is good advice for anybody, and especially anybody with a zeppelin ego.

Unfortunately, not all of Mitchell's choices are so judicious. His introduction is enormously annoying, as it wades into a marsh of lit-crit nonsense. He labels Enkidu "the original Greenpeace activist." He calls Gilgamesh and Enkidu closeted gays, apparently because he believes all close male friendships must harbor a homoerotic element. Finally, he informs us that if only the Bush administration had been more familiar with the wisdom of the poem, we might have been spared that unjust invasion of Iraq. It seems that Mitchell counts Sin-leqi-unninni as one of those "poets against the war."

Mitchell bases his provocative claim about modern Iraq on the portion of the poem describing the efforts of Gilgamesh and Enkidu to fight Humbaba, the forest monster. (Writes Mitchell: "Having a monster or two around to guard our national forests from corporate and other predators wouldn't be such a bad thing.") On the original tablets, these sections are badly damaged—they represent the parts about which scholars and interpreters can say the least. Yet Mitchell insists that the key to the meaning of Gilgamesh lies in these lines. "I love how the poet morally situated his poem so that as soon as we are tempted to take a position about good and evil, we realize that there is an opposite and equally valid position," writes Mitchell. "It is all too easy to see ourselves as fighting on God's side, to identify our ideology with what is best for the world and use it to justify crusades, pogroms, or preemptive attacks."

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Talk about anachronisms! Mitchell wants the poem to reflect the moral relativism of our own day, even though it comes from the same culture that invented the Code of Hammurabi and its rigid principle of *lex talionis*. Other interpreters have not fallen into this trap. Ferry, for instance, recognizes that Gilgamesh and Enkidu hope to achieve personal glory by engaging in deadly combat against Humbaba. But he also portrays Humbaba as an evil demon worth destroying. There is nothing too complicated about it: There is no opposite and equally valid position, and there is certainly no left-wing sermonizing about U.S. foreign policy.

It's a shame that Mitchell lets these contemporary blinders mar what is in many ways a fine rendition of *Gilgamesh*. He is a capable translator and his footnotes are fascinating. Readers who skip his editorializing at the start of the book and dive right into the poem itself will receive a perfectly good introduction to the oldest story in the world. Those who continue to explore the epic eventually will develop their own personal preferences among the many editions of *Gilgamesh*. My own run in this direction: For context-setting, Andrew George followed by Sandars; for the poem itself, Ferry; and for a detailed look at the sorts of decisions modern interpreters must make, Gardner and Maier followed by Mitchell.

At the end of *Gilgamesh*—everybody's *Gilgamesh*—the hero comes up short in his quest to live forever. He returns to his city, where he eventually must die and will be forgotten. This, in fact, is similar to what really happened: The legend of Gilgamesh was lost. The West did not consciously imbibe the heritage of Babylon, Nineveh, and Uruk, as it did the heritage of Athens, Jerusalem, and Rome. Yet the hard work of diggers like Layard, decrypters like Rawlinson, and combinations of the two like Smith have allowed the West to recover much of Mesopotamian civilization. What was lost became found. It turns out that Gilgamesh did not die; he merely went into hibernation. Now he is with us once more—if not precisely as an immortal, then at least as a man whose story is still worth reading.

Shorter notices

John Saumarez Smith, editor
The Bookshop at 10 Curzon Street: Letters between Nancy Mitford and Heywood Hill, 1952–73.
Frances Lincoln, 191 pages, £12.99

"When a man is tired of London," Dr. Johnson observed, "he is tired of life." By the same token, when a man is tired of Heywood Hill, he is tired of books. This charming London bookstore, tucked away in a quiet bit of Mayfair, is my favorite purveyor of books. It sells new books—I always acquire a few when I go there—but it is for its couches of old and rare books that the shop is best known. "Couches"? That, it turns out, is Heywood Hill-ese for piles, of which there is an enticing abundance in this bookshop.

By comparison with today's Barnes & Noble leviathans, HH is tiny, but it has a stellar collection, always full of surprises, and what they don't happen to have they know about and can always get. John Saumarez Smith, who came to the shop in 1965 and now runs it, is cheerfully omniscient and somehow manages to turn up even the most out-of-the-way volume within weeks. I've never been able to stump him, though I have tried. I wonder if Nancy Mitford, who worked at Heywood Hill's shop in the 1940s, was as impressively erudite.

As Mr. Saumarez Smith notes, there is no shortage of published material about Nancy Mitford and her sisters. Since her death in 1973 at 68, the author of *The Pursuit of Love*, *Voltaire in Love*, and those infamous reflections on "U" and "non-U" usage has emerged as a cult interest, as have her sisters. Every time a biography or new collection of letters appears I read it and then say "Enough! No more." Until the next one appears, which I proceed to gobble up. This volume of letters between NM, then living

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in Paris, and G. Heywood Hill (1907–1986) is like a glass of champagne, from a good year, at a quiet garden party. It's a beautiful day, one is among friends—but not too many—and laughter reigns.

Nancy, in 1963:

> Abbé Girard, quite the nicest of priests, who came here, asked for *Voltaire Amoureux*, so I said to Mme. Costa what should I put comme dédicace. She said I think better put nothng or else when he is dead & they look at this book, he will be *compromised*. "You see you are such a beautiful young (sic) lady, it's not as though you were Mme. de Pange." Can you wonder I like coming here!

And here is HH from 1971:

> One of [his wife] Anne's other brothers Bob—the one who talks hind legs off people—has been staying with [his daughter] Harriet. H. writes "At the end of one long talkative evening, I had gone to bed. I heard Bob saying to [her husband] Tim, Well, my dear, I must say I think Gray's Elegy is one of the really GREAT works of art (humm, sniff, snort). Well, I think, replied Tim, it's the biggest load of crap I've ever read. Bob got up & went to bed.

—Roger Kimball

Art Spiegelman
In the Shadow of No Towers.
Pantheon Books, 42 pages, $19.95

Art Spiegelman is conversant in large-scale tragedy. His comic book *Maus*, which earned him a Pulitzer in 1992, painstakingly and painfully recounts his father's years in Auschwitz. Recently Spiegelman reacted to a fresher nightmare (he says: "disaster is my muse!") in a garishly colorful, large-format graphic novel called *In the Shadow of No Towers*. He experienced the collapse of the WTC at close range. The book is undeniably a valuable record of that day, a *cri de coeur* drawn out by one of the worst days our country has seen.

The book is lovingly modeled on old Sunday pages, like *Little Nemo in Slumberland* and *The Yellow Kid*. Its "lessons," however, are woefully ugly. It is not a hopeful work. It is clogged with left-wing banalities: we have, for instance, "squandered chances to bring the community of nations together . . ." Embarrassingly *de trop* visual gags—Dick Cheney slitting a bald eagle's throat with a box-cutter, cowboy boots raining down on Ground Zero (the RNC, you see)—are the dominant iconography. What little that is really personal and affecting about *No Towers* is drowned out by an unmodulated onslaught of Bush-bashing slogans and imagery.

One hoped that anyone who felt the evil at work on 9/11 would turn his anger more forcefully on the monsters who made it. But *No Towers*, like so much talk about the destruction of the WTC, reserves its ire for Us, not Them. Spiegelman may be smart enough to know that Cheney and his "cabal" didn't remote-control those planes into our Twin Towers, but one would never guess it to read his comics. When even an intelligent man, who once showed us so skillfully what evil wrought on his own family, can't point to the real villains—well, these may be the funny papers, but it's no laughing matter for the future of our country.

—Stefan Beck

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Notebook

The "Memory" of Czeslaw Milosz, 1911–2004

by Hilton Kramer

I think that I am here, on this earth,
To present a report on it, but to whom I
don't know.
As if I were sent so that whatever takes place
Has meaning because it changes into memory.
—Czeslaw Milosz, "Consciousness"

Among the many enduring literary monuments that have been left to us in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demise of the international Communist movement, and the end of the Cold War, none has proven to be more profound in its comprehension of the evil character of Soviet power that Czeslaw Milosz's *Captive Mind* (1953). Written at the height of the Cold War and at a time when elite intellectual opinion on both sides of the Atlantic—but most emphatically in Western Europe—was aggressively promoting a craven détente with Stalin's slave-labor empire, *The Captive Mind* was a good deal more than a political polemic. It was a detailed and devastating analysis of the morally corrupting and intellectually bankrupt character of Soviet culture, and all the more powerful in coming from a poet of world-class distinction who had first-hand knowledge of the blight that had been visited upon Russia and his native Poland by the yoke of Stalin's tyranny.

The Captive Mind was something else as well: an elegy for the civilization that had already been destroyed wherever Soviet power reigned, and a visionary indictment of the "New Faith" that was rapidly supplanting the surviving remnants of that civilization—a Faith in which even the memory of the non-Communist past was held to be a punishable heresy, if not indeed grounds for political murder.

There are many good reasons to honor the memory of Milosz, who died in August at the age of ninety-three. He was not only a writer of multiple achievements but also a prophet of liberation for whom the individual exercise of disabused memory came to constitute a spiritual vocation. So let us, as a tribute to his memory and his elevation of memory to a moral imperative, recall some of the key passages from *The Captive Mind*.

> "The development of a new man" is the key point in New Faith's program. Demands made upon Party members are exceedingly harsh. One exacts from them no small degree of abstinence. As a result, admission to the Party is not unlike entrance into a religious order; and the literature of the New Faith treats this fact with a gravity equal to that with which Catholic literature speaks of the vows of young nuns. The higher one stands in Party hierarchy, the more attentively is one's private life supervised. . . . Hence the upper brackets of the Party are filled by ascetics devoted to the single cause of Revolution.
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> * * *
>
> It is hard to define the type of relationship that prevails between people in the East otherwise

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than as acting, with the exception that one does not perform on a theater stage but in the street, office, factory, meeting hall, or even the room one lives in. Such acting is a highly developed craft that places a premium upon mental alertness. Before it leaves the lips, every word must be evaluated as to its consequences. A smile that appears at the wrong moment, a glance that is not all it should be can occasion dangerous suspicions and accusations. Even one's gestures, tone of voice, or preference for certain kinds of neckties are interpreted as signs of one's political tendencies.

* * *

Mayakovski's suicide in 1930 marked the end of an era distinguished by the flowering of literature, the theater, and music. The "sacred fire" was dampened, collectivization was introduced mercilessly, millions of Soviet citizens perished in slave labor camps, a ruthless policy toward non-Russian nations was established. Literature became flat and colorless under the influence of imposed theories; Russian painting was destroyed; Russian theater, then the foremost in the world, was deprived of freedom to experiment; science was subjected to directives from Party chiefs. A man who reasons thus hates Him [Stalin] with all his heart, holding Him responsible for the terrible lot of the Russian people and for the hatred they inspire in other nations.

Still, he is not altogether sure whether He is necessary or not. Perhaps in extraordinary periods such as the present the appearance of a tyrant must be considered desirable. Mass purges in which so many good communists died, the lowering of the living standard of the citizens, the reduction of artists and scholars to the status of yes-men, the extermination of entire national groups—what other man would dare undertake such measures? After all, Russia stood firm against Hitler; the Revolution weathered the attack of enemy armies. In this perspective, His acts seem effective and even justified, perhaps, by an exceptional situation.

* * *

To forestall doubt, the Party fights any tendency to delve into the depths of a human being, especially in literature and art. Whoever reflects on "man" in general, on his inner needs and longings, is accused of bourgeois sentimentality. Nothing must ever go beyond the description of man's behavior as a member of a social group. This is necessary because the Party, treating man exclusively as the by-product of social forces, believes that he becomes the type of being he pictures himself to be. He is a social monkey. *What is not expressed does not exist*.

* * *

In its own fashion, the Party too is a church. Its dictatorship over the earth and its transformation of the human species depend on the success with which it can channel irrational human drives and use them for its own ends. . . . No other church can be tolerated; Christianity is Public Enemy No. 1. It fosters all the skepticism of the masses as to the radical transformation of mankind. If, as the Gospel teaches, we must not do harm unto others, then perhaps we must not harm kulaks? If the highest glory does not belong to man, then perhaps worship of Lenin and Stalin is idolatry.

* * *

The party knows that conflict between true Christianity and the Revolution is fundamental. The Revolution aims at the highest goal the human species has ever set for itself on earth, the end of "man's exploitation of man." This is a distant and honorable goal. Probably it will not be reached quickly; and probably, too, for a long period it will be necessary to maintain a constant terror in order to instill that feeling of responsibility by force.

It is no wonder, then, that Milosz described *The Captive Mind* as a "battlefield." It was a battlefield in the war of ideas that was waged in the face of a tyranny that was determined to eradicate not only individual volition but even the memory of its prior existence—a tyranny, as *The Captive Mind* reminded us, that was molding "the lives of 800 millions of human beings."

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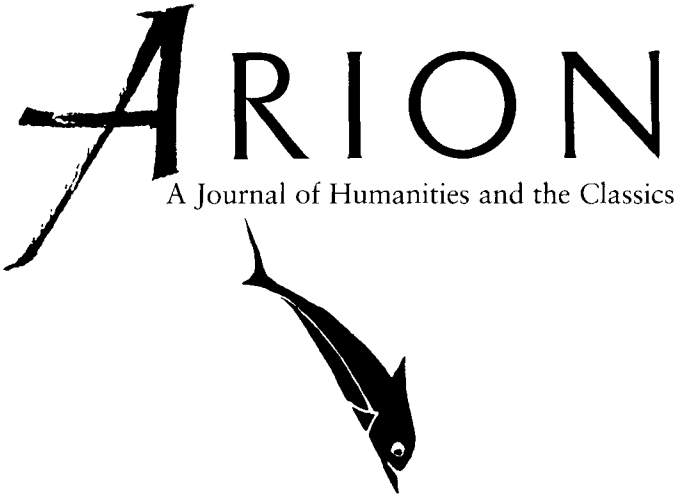

The grand sequence of the classical tradition, which extends in various strands through the Middle Ages and Renaissance to the scientific Enlightenment and modern era, is actually a master paradigm for how to structure an authentically multicultural curriculum on a global scale. All students abroad as well as in the US need to learn the general contours of the world's major artistic and cultural traditions. These long channels of lineage can best be understood as streams—mighty rivers that are fed by tributaries and that are a confluence of mixed and varied material . . .

Camille Paglia, "The Mighty River of Classics"
Arion Volume IX, Number 2.

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- **E** **W. H. Auden:** *The Poetry of W. H. Auden* (59 min.)
- **F** **Carlos Castaneda:** *Don Juan: The Sorcerer* (38 min.)
- **G** **Albert Schweitzer:** *On Goethe (trans. by Thornton Wilder)* (80 min.)
- **H** **Edward De Bono:** *How to Change Ideas* (55 min.)
- **I** **Erich Fromm:** *To Have or to Be: The Nature of the Psyche* (56 min.)
- **J** **Robert Frost:** *An Evening with Robert Frost* (55 min.)
- **K** **Buckminster Fuller:** *Twentieth-Century Renaissance* (55 min.)
- **L** **Jacob Bronowski:** *The Ascent of Man* (55 min.)
- **M** **Gilbert Highet:** *Proverbs and Anatomy of Slang* (30 min.)
- **N** **Viktor E. Frankl:** *What Is Meant by Meaning* (33 min.)
- **O** **G. Wilson Knight:** *Shakespeare and the English Language* (30 min.)
- **P** **Robert Lowell:** *Reads and Discusses His Poetry* (28 min.)
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- **W** **Upton Sinclair:** *A Pen to Change America* (40 min.)
- **X** **Stephen Spender:** *T.S. Eliot and George Orwell* (41 min.)
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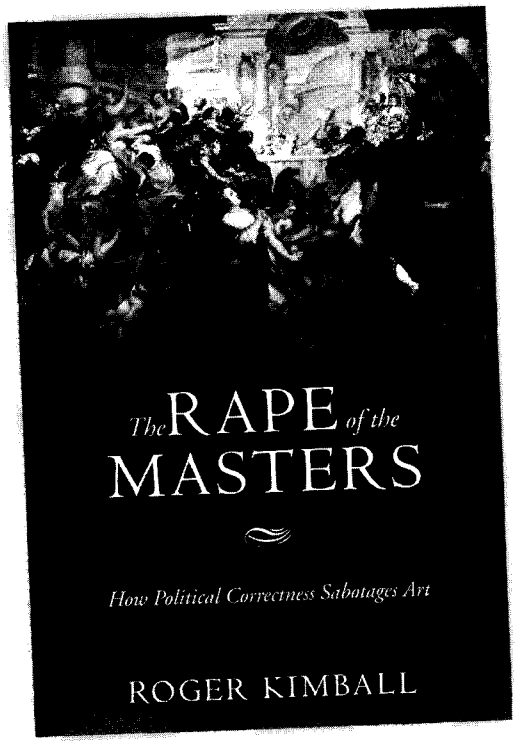

Colleges and universities used to teach art history to encourage connoisseurship and acquaint students with the riches of our artistic heritage. But, as Roger Kimball shows in this witty and provocative book, today's students are less likely to learn about the aesthetics of master works than be told, for instance, that Peter Paul Rubens's great painting "Drunken Silenus" is an allegory about rape; or that Jan van Eyck's masterful Arnolfini Portrait is about "middle-class deceptions... and the treatment of women;" or that Winslow Homer's "The Gulf Stream" is "a visual encoding of racism."

In *The Rape of the Masters: How Political Correctness Sabotages Art*, Kimball, a noted art critic himself, shows how academic art history is increasingly held hostage to radical cultural politics—feminism, cultural studies, post-colonial studies, the whole armory of academic anti-humanism. To make his point, Kimball shows how eight famous works of art—all of them reproduced in the book—have been interpreted by contemporary art historians to fit a radical ideological fantasy. Then, in his own exemplary analysis of these great works in which aesthetics, not politics, guides the discussion, Kimball shows how each of these paintings should properly be understood.

The Rape of the Masters exposes the charlatanry that fuels much academic art history and oozes into the art world generally. It also provides an engaging antidote to the tendentious, politically motivated assaults on our treasured sources of culture and civilization that take place in today's universities, museums, and art galleries.

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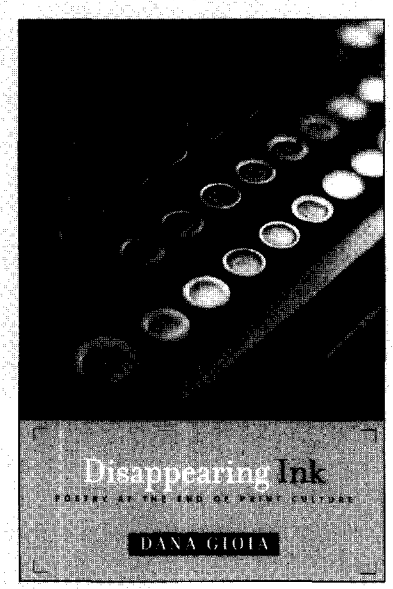
Disappearing Ink:

Poetry at the End of Print Culture

DANA GIOIA



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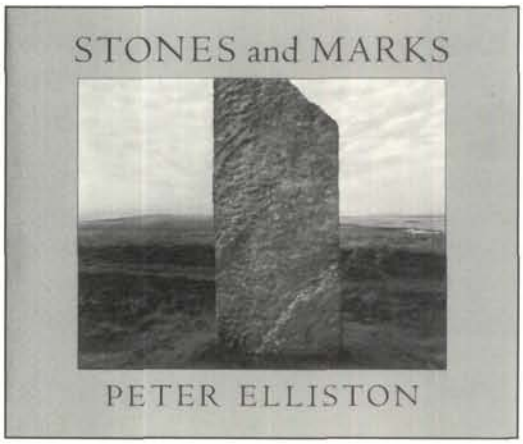

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